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IT'S GOOD TO BE ALIVE

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*It's Good To Be
Alive*

By
Henrietta Bruce Sharon

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*To the men
in Army and Navy Hospitals
with gratitude, admiration, and love*

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HENRIETTA SHARON

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CHAPTER I

THE CHAPLAIN

IT WAS A HOT SUNDAY IN August, and the service in the little chapel at Brooklyn Naval Hospital had just ended. Waves, officers, nurses, members of the hospital corps and patients filed out. Each one paused outside the door to shake hands with the Protestant chaplain, Lieut. (j.g.) John Oldman, (CHC), USNR. The hospital personnel, after a brief word, went about their business, but the patients crowded around the Chaplain to ask questions or just to talk. I stood against the wall, waiting for him to finish talking with them so that I could have five minutes of his time.

Captain Robertson, medical officer in command of the hospital, and two officers, all three in whites,

came out of the Chapel and spoke a few words to the Chaplain while the patients drew back respectfully. Then the Captain and the two officers walked away and the boys closed in again around the Chaplain. After a while most of them, having asked their questions or said their say, drifted off, until finally there was only one man left. He was a quartermaster, a tall dark-haired young man, who had remained aloof while the others were there, obviously waiting to speak to the Chaplain alone. But all the time he stood inside the Chapel door, I noticed he was smiling to himself. When he went up to the Chaplain, the Chaplain asked him a question, and he answered in a voice loud enough for me to hear: "Yes, sir, I'm leaving today."

The Chaplain, seeing me watching, called me over.

"Benson," he said to me, "is going home to the new baby he's never seen."

Benson's face lit up again. It was all one broad grin.

"Yes, ma'am," he said, "I'm a father. I've got a son."

"How old is he?" I asked.

"He's seven months old. My wife says he looks

like me, but," he laughed apologetically, "I expect she exaggerated a little."

"Where are you from?" I asked.

"Topeka, Kansas."

"How long has it been since you were home?"

"A little over a year. I got a piece of shrapnel in my knee back in January and spent three weeks in a couple of Eyetalian hospitals. When they shipped me back to the U.S.A., they stuck me here for another six months. I kept applying for a thirty-day leave, but they gave me a discharge instead." He grinned. "I wrote my wife I was taking the long way home."

"Benson had his picture sketched by one of the artists," said the Chaplain to me.

"Mr. Mingo drew it," explained Benson. "I sent it home to my wife," he added. "She thought it was swell."

Suddenly he became brisk.

"I'm afraid I've got to be going now," he announced. "Pleased to have met you, ma'am."

We shook hands.

"Good luck," I said.

"Thank you, ma'am. Good-bye, sir," he said,

turning to the Chaplain. "And thanks—thanks for everything."

"Good-bye, Benson," said the Chaplain, shaking hands, "and good luck."

"Thank you, sir."

The Chaplain and I started to walk back to his office.

"Did you notice Benson during the service?" the Chaplain asked.

"No."

"He was grinning," said the Chaplain. "Every time I looked at him, he was grinning. He grinned all through the service. I suppose he'll grin all the way back to Kansas."

The Chaplain looked at me.

"Now you're doing it," he said.

"So are you," I retorted.

We turned to our right down a corridor, our footsteps sounding muffled on the polished linoleum floor, and went out the side door of Building A, marked "For Officers Only," and down a flight of stone steps.

The Chaplain's office was in A Annex, and the sign over the door read, "Chaplain's Office, Welfare and Recreation." There was no one in the

Welfare and Recreation Office, except a sailor who was pounding out something on a typewriter. To the right of the front office was an office belonging to the Catholic chaplain and on the left was the one used by Chaplain Oldman.

The Chaplain sat down behind his desk, and I sat in the chair across from him.

"Isn't next week the anniversary of your program?" the Chaplain asked.

"Yes," I said. "It started a year ago, on the nineteenth of August, 1943, in this same hospital. And lately I've been doing a sort of mental summing up. I've been finding out how much the whole thing has changed; how much the artists have changed; how much I have changed—" I paused, puzzling over it.

"Tell me about it," said the Chaplain. He lit a cigarette and leaned back in his chair.

It had seemed such a simple idea at first. I wanted to sketch the patients in Army and Navy hospitals and give them the drawings to send home. I wanted to organize a group of artists to go with me. It was as simple as that.

I had been told that it was impossible to get into the hospitals without the backing of some organiza-

tion, but none of them would listen to me. USO had no entrance into the hospitals. USO-Camp Shows wanted only theatrical entertainment. The Red Cross was not interested. In desperation I told the story to Lieut. Robert Heininger, USNR. He was in the Welfare and Recreation Department of the Third Naval District, and through the hands of this department passed all entertainment for Naval hospitals in the New York area.

"You know how it began," I said to the Chaplain. "Lieut. Heininger arranged for me to make an 'unofficial' visit to Brooklyn Naval Hospital and told me the hospital would send the Welfare car to pick me up. I chose the Vanderbilt Hotel as a meeting place and we have used it ever since. I had guaranteed to organize a group of artists, so he said that I could bring two with me on that first trip. The funny part of that was that I didn't know any artists in New York. But that didn't seem the time to break the news to Lieut. Heininger."

"I never heard that story before," said the Chaplain. "What did you do?"

"Well, the Art Department of the *New York Times* told me that Albert Hirschfeld—he's the *Times* staff cartoonist, you know—and Barney To-

bey—who's now in the Army—sketched servicemen at the Stage Door Canteen. So I telephoned them and told them the story and they agreed to go. We met in the lobby of the Vanderbilt and recognized one another by our sketch pads."

"How did you get more artists?" asked the Chaplain.

"Telephoned the ones whose names I found in the telephone book, and they told other artists. The story grew by word of mouth, so that by the time Lieut. Heininger asked me to take on St. Albans Naval Hospital, I had almost enough artists to juggle between the two hospitals. When I started the program, I'll admit I was pretty vague about it. I thought of it as entertainment for the men. It was Olson who told me it had therapeutic and educational value."

"Olson was sold on the artists from the beginning," agreed the Chaplain.

He offered me a cigarette and lit it for me.

"At first the artists were as vague as I was," I went on. "They wanted to go to the hospitals for different reasons. Some of them were groping to find their place in the war. Some of the men had sons in it, or had been in the last war and wanted

to be a part of this one. Some of the women had husbands or sweethearts overseas. Some thought it would be good practice to draw from life. Some were just curious to see the inside of an Army or Naval hospital. All of them were steeled to put up with the 'depressing atmosphere' of a hospital and they were all ready to do a great job of 'building up the morale of the boys.' "

"And what happened?" asked the Chaplain, smiling a little.

"You know very well what happened," I said, "and you've been watching it very smugly, haven't you?"

His smile broadened, but he only said, "Go on."

"Well, the artists who thought it would be good practice forgot about that after the first time. They forgot to make an artistic drawing and they forgot to preserve their cherished style. They remembered only to make a good likeness the way the patient wanted it. The artists who went out of curiosity kept on going because they were deeply interested. And the artists who were groping to find their place in the war, found it. And as to who built up whose morale—well," I said, laughing a little ruefully, "you know the answer to that, too."

"Yes," said the Chaplain.

"Of course, I can't say," I went on, "that every individual artist has been similarly affected, but I know that a great many of them have. It's almost impossible to be exposed continuously to the men in these hospitals and not respond. Their spirit, which they would call guts, and the way they face reality—no sham, no pretense, nothing phony; their sense of democracy; their vitality and drive; the way they share their experiences to 'build up the guy in the next bed'; their sense of humor—all these things have done something to us."

The Chaplain inspected me gravely.

"What's happened is very simple," he said. "You've had a kind of spiritual awakening."

"Yes," I said, crushing out my cigarette in the ash tray on his desk. "I guess that's it. I've been discussing it with some of the other artists. In fact, we've talked a lot about it and we've all been wondering . . ."

"Yes?"

"Well, it's hard to put into words. I'm not sure I can. But, if—if this can happen to us, if the spirit of these men can be preserved and carried out into civilian life, won't it continue to affect the people

who are exposed to it? Won't it gradually bring about the very ideological victory which we had hoped for?"

"That depends," said the Chaplain, "upon a number of things. You see, the spiritual awakening we were speaking of is an individual experience. It will reach the people who are ready for it, who are receptive to it. Then, too, the spirit the men have—and it's real, I've seen it—is a group spirit. The hospitals, as you know, are a little world in themselves, and the men are in this thing together, sharing things and, as you say, building up the guy in the next bed. But they've got to build him up or let him tear them down. You know that a griper doesn't have a chance in these hospitals. Everybody gangs up on him. You say these men face reality, but they have to; it's the only way they can survive. And the reality they face is the reality of idealism. They know that in the hospital world they are their brother's keeper. But you take these men out into civilian life where they are no longer buoyed up by this spirit, where their economic conditions are changed and they begin to live again the old competitive 'root-hog-or die' existence, where they are

among people who are not facing reality, as they see it, and what happens?"

I shook my head.

The Chaplain ran his fingers through his hair, which he kept shorter than any G.I. haircut in the hospital. His young face was earnest.

"It depends on two things," he said, "the way I see it. It depends upon whether the individual man is strong enough to fight alone, or it depends upon the willingness of other people to help the man build the same kind of world he has created in the hospital. Do you remember the parable of the Prodigal Son?" asked the Chaplain. He quoted softly, "'But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him . . . and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.' So, you see," said the Chaplain, "the families and the employers and the very government itself must go forward to meet him."

"Yes," I said, "I see what you mean. One of the Chaplains at Valley Forge Hospital said somewhat the same thing to me. And he said, too, that he thought the war was changing the thinking of the chaplains. He felt they were facing a different kind of reality, also, and he believed that many of them would return to their churches more concerned with

truth than membership, and faith than formalities."

"I believe that, too," said the Chaplain. "And I think it's safe to say that whatever the cost of this war, there is a greater percentage of individuals thinking spiritually than ever before. And that," said the Chaplain, "is progress. Christ, Himself, worked through the individual."

He leaned back in his chair and lit another cigarette.

"Would you care to stay for dinner?" he asked.

"I can't today, thank you," I said, getting up hastily. "I didn't realize it was so late. I'm afraid I must dash."

He walked to the door with me.

"I'll see you Thursday night," he said. "Good-bye."

As I walked down the driveway past Building A, I glanced back, as usual, at the big grey stone structure and read the inscription over the front door, "U. S. Naval Hospital, erected under act of Congress, A.D., 1838," thinking as I always did how old it was, and how there must have been wounded here from the Mexican War and the Civil War and the Spanish-American War and World War I and now . . .

CHAPTER II

OLSON

ALLAN OLSON WAS A Welfare Specialist, First Class, USNR, and his duties were to assist the Protestant chaplain at the Brooklyn Naval Hospital with everything regarding the welfare and recreation of the patients. These duties ran the gamut from arranging weddings, funerals and dances, to providing theatre tickets, playing the organ for chapel services, and finally taking our weekly program of artists under his wing.

Lieut. Heininger, having gotten us established, had temporarily washed his hands of us. Chaplain Sparling, who had been in charge of Welfare and Recreation on our first trial visit to the Brooklyn Naval Hospital, had been transferred, and the new chaplain had not yet arrived, so it was Olson who took us over.

Olson was a philosopher. He liked to sit back of his desk, smoking his inevitable hookah-like pipe with its peculiar metal stem, and philosophize with the patients. He knew every boy in the hospital; where he came from, what was on his mind, any ambitions he had, the name of his girl and where he hurt the most. He officiated as best man at weddings. He wrote letters to the families, listened to confidences, found outlets for a man's hobby and encouraged him in it. He talked boys out of going AWOL, and smoothed down the irate parents of local daughters. He discussed financial, religious or emotional problems with equal facility. He held the hand of a man when he was dying and accompanied the dead body home. He lived, ate and breathed the hospital life, and when he went off on a long overdue leave, he did so with open reluctance. What might not happen in his absence?

On my second trip to the hospital Olson told me that there was one particular patient he wanted me to sketch. The boy—Mickey—had cancer and couldn't live very long. Olson thought it might amuse him to have his picture drawn and might please his family to have the picture.

Brooklyn, Olson told me, was the only Naval

hospital on the Eastern seaboard that specialized in the treatment of cancer. I was shocked to find that there were so many cases of young men with cancer. I had always thought of it as a disease belonging to age.

The ward that night was nearly empty. Everyone who had a pair of legs and a pass had gone on liberty—only the pass was obligatory. Those without it were attending the movies, in wheelchairs or on crutches, in the recreation hall.

Mickey was sitting up in bed. He was little and bony and he looked like Dumbo—great big ears, thin pointed face, and a top-knot of untidy red hair that stood up like froth on a glass of beer. He was dangling his bare feet outside the sheet. He wasn't reading or playing cards, but was just sitting there holding his skinny body as if it hurt him. When Olson asked him if he'd like to have his picture drawn, he looked up with a one-sided grin.

"Sure," he said, "why not?"

I sat down and began to draw and Olson stood watching, smoking his pipe and wearing his quiz-zical smile. After a while he said to Mickey, "Why don't you give her a piece of your pie, Mickey?"

Mickey looked embarrassed.

"I've eaten it all," he admitted, avoiding my eyes.

"What kind was it?" I asked, making conversation.

"Blueberry. My mother baked it."

"I'll bet you come from New England," I hazarded.

His eyes were looking directly at me now.

"I sure do— Beverly, Massachusetts. I guess you've never heard of it—ma'am." He added the "ma'am" belligerently.

"I know it very well," I admitted. "I suppose you believe that Beverly is the birthplace of the American Navy."

He looked at me with surprise.

"Of course. I know it is."

"Oh, no, it isn't," I contradicted flatly. "Marblehead is."

"Excuse me, ma'am, but that's a slight exaggeration on the part of the Marbleheaders. Beverly is the birthplace of the American Navy. I could prove it if I had a certain book here."

"Any history of America would prove you wrong."

We glared at each other. Mickey's eyes crinkled at the corners and he began to laugh.

"What is this, anyway?" demanded Olson.

"Just an old quarrel," laughed Mickey, "about two hundred years old."

"Isn't the new one enough?" asked Olson.

"Sure, sure," said Mickey, "but not so much fun."

"Marblehead is really . . ." I began.

Mickey held up a bony hand authoritatively.

"I can show you that book," he said. "Will you be coming back again?"

I looked at Olson. Olson nodded.

"I'll be back next week," I promised.

I came back every week after that but I never saw the book proving that Beverly was the birthplace of the American Navy. As Olson said, Mickey himself was better proof than any book. Every week I saw him he was thinner. He weighed less than seventy pounds. He was nothing but bones and spirit.

In November they moved him from the ward into a cubicle and finally into one of the quiet rooms where I would stop in to see him. He was too weak now to sit up but he would look up from the pillow all ears and eyes, his lips twisted into a one-sided grin, and we would go through the old routine.

"Beverly—no, Marblehead—no, Beverly—!"

Half an hour before he died he tried to say something to Olson. Olson bent over and put his ear close to Mickey's lips. His lips moved, the corners quirked into a half-smile.

"Tell her," he said distinctly, "Beverly is the birthplace of the American Navy."

* * *

After our adoption by Olson, he elected to come for us himself in the Welfare station wagon. Every Thursday night he was waiting for us at 5:30 in the lobby of the Vanderbilt. I have often wondered what the Vanderbilt management thinks of the growing crowd of people, armed with large sketch pads, who arrive every Thursday and Monday at 5:30, use up most of the lobby chairs for fifteen minutes or more, then stream forth to climb into a Navy Welfare station wagon or a Red Cross ambulance. Sometimes an artist or a Red Cross driver, new to the procedure, will hurry into the lobby, rush up to the desk and ask the indignant room clerk to please ring Miss Sharon's room. I am always expecting to receive a bill from the Vanderbilt for "use of lobby, Mondays and Thursdays, 5:30 to 6 P.M."

For the first months there were so few of us on

Thursday nights that we rattled around in the station wagon like pebbles in a rain barrel. Wallace Morgan, famous illustrator, who had been AEF artist in World War I, came regularly and brought with him Willard Fairchild. I spent most of my lunch hours tracking down artists. Gradually I added to the list Louis Giacobbe (who is now in the Navy), George Greller, of the *Herald Tribune*, and Victor de Pauw, who draws for the *New Yorker* and *Fortune*.

It was Olson who told us that the drawings we were making in the wards were not just entertainment for the patients. He said they had educational and therapeutic value. This had been unconscious on our part, and we listened with amazement when he told us the far-reaching results which he traced from the simple process of making a drawing.

One of the stories was about Charles Paris, a commercial artist, who went to the hospital with us one evening quite by mistake. Robert McKay brought Paris along. When we were halfway to the hospital, Paris informed me that he could only draw horses. This was staggering. I felt I could have coped with pin-up girls, but pin-up horses were too big a problem!

Olson, of course, solved it. He took Paris to one of the wards to draw a boy who was so ill that for several days he had been under a twenty-four-hour watch. The boy was an ex-cowboy from New Mexico, named Jimmy, with a passion for horses, and Olson hoped that a drawing of a horse might arouse his interest.

He introduced Paris to Jimmy, who was lying flat in bed and didn't bother to speak. Paris sat down by the bed and spread out his materials—he had brought water colors. Jimmy closed his eyes to show his disinterest. But when Olson passed through the ward a little later on the way back to his office, the ex-cowboy was resting on one elbow, watching the horse growing under Paris' fingers, and when Olson came back a little before nine to collect Paris, the patient was sitting up in bed, the finished drawing on his knees, eagerly discussing horses with Paris.

I took Paris back the next week at Olson's request. Olson told me that after that first visit the twenty-four-hour watch was no longer necessary; Jimmy had apparently made up his mind to get well. He was dressed and walking when Paris returned to the hospital and he introduced him to the other men in the ward as "my friend, Mr. Paris, the

artist." Several months later Jimmy went back to sea duty.

* * *

It was Olson who saw that I drew Curly's picture. Curly had just learned that he would have to have his leg amputated, and the shock of it was still in his eyes.

"It isn't so tough on me," he told me in his soft Texas drawl, "but it'll be tough on my mother. I have to phone her at eight. Is it eight yet?" he asked anxiously.

"No, it's only seven-thirty. What happened to your leg?"

"I fell on it. The worst of it is," he said apologetically, "it happened here in this country during my boot training. I didn't even get overseas.

"I've got two brothers in the Navy," he said. "It's hard on my mother. Is it eight o'clock yet?"

I shook my head. I was drawing his mouth now. It was a sensitive mouth, underlined by a firm chin.

"How old are you?"

"Nearly nineteen. I wanted to be in it," he said. His voice shook. I went on drawing.

"There's a boy across the room from you who lost his leg in Sicily," I said. "Have you met him?"

"No," said Curly. His voice was under control now.

"What's his name?" he asked.

"Garrick," I said.

I had drawn Garrick the day after he had been flown back from Sicily. Olson had told me he couldn't live very long. There was a tent over what remained of his leg. It was still draining. He looked white and sick from loss of blood, but his grin was contagious.

"I guess I had a break," he said. "They took me ashore to have my leg cut off and the day after that my ship was sunk off the coast of Sicily. I might have been in Davy Jones's locker. I guess I had a break."

A corpsman pushing a wheelchair stopped at Curly's bed.

"It's five minutes of eight," he said.

Curly's eyes darkened. He sat up in bed and swung his legs carefully over the side. The corpsman helped him into the wheelchair. I held up my crossed fingers in the proverbial gesture of good luck. Curly returned the salute, and the corpsman rolled him away down the ward.

When Curly came back later, I was drawing the

boy in the bed next to his. Curly held up his hands. The fingers on both hands were crossed and he was smiling. His mother hadn't let him down.

Curly told me later that when Garrick heard he was going to have his leg cut off he asked to meet him. Garrick was in a cubicle by that time, and Curly went to see him. Garrick talked to Curly for a long time. He told him what it was like to have an amputation and he gave him a copy of the *Reader's Digest*. It was the issue that contained an article telling how people with artificial limbs could hold down jobs and carry on a normal life. Curly said that just talking with Garrick made everything easier. He said that seeing it through Garrick's eyes made him feel that he was not alone.

"Guys with amputations," said Curly, "want to face facts. They don't want to gloss over things. If a guy has lost a leg or an arm, he doesn't want you to look at him and pretend you don't notice it, or feel sorry for him. He'd rather have you kid him. But I reckon it's hard for families to realize that. Sometimes you gotta share an experience before you understand it, like Garrick did with me. It's funny about the way my toes itch—the ones I haven't got,

I mean. Sometimes I even get a cramp in my foot, just as if it was still there."

"Why?" I asked.

"Well, the doc said that probably the nerves in my stump were still sending pain messages to my brain, and I just *thought* my foot ached. But he gave me a novocain injection anyway, and it's Okay now."

Curly wanted to stay in service. He told me about a sailor he knew, a former patient at the Brooklyn Naval Hospital, who had had both legs amputated and who had been given shore duty and made a higher rating.

"I've been fitted for my leg," he said. "Have you seen the way they work?"

"No."

"The leg is hollowed out to fit your stump and it's gotta be exactly the right length. When your stump is healed enough, you learn to use it a little every day; at first, with crutches, until you get used to it. You walk on your heels sort of, because the pressure of the heel bends the knee joint." He gestured. "Get it?"

"I get it."

While he was waiting for his leg, he hopped

around the hospital on crutches. Everybody knew him. He was a familiar sight in any ward or walking down any corridor. He went out on liberty on every possible occasion. He waited for his leg the way a child waits for Christmas. It was six weeks overdue. He told me that was because the demand was increased and the factories were working overtime to produce artificial limbs.

A few days before Christmas, Curly went home on leave. He went in the quiet room where Garrick lay to tell him good-bye. Garrick was dying, and Curly said 'so long' to him just before he died.

Curly's leave lasted sixty days. The first night I saw him after his return, he was swaggering around the ward on his crutches, telling everyone about the beauties of Texas. He came up behind me and put both hands over my eyes.

"Guess who?" he demanded.

"I don't have to, you loud-voiced Texan," I said. "Did you have a wonderful time? How is that girl of yours?"

"Which one?" asked Olson, who was watching me drawing a boy in a wheelchair with a tumor on his spine.

"There's only one," said Curly, "and she's deep in the heart of Texas."

"Clap-clap," said Pete, the boy in the wheelchair, unfeelingly.

"Curly," said Olson, "have you met O'Connor yet?"

Curly shook his head.

"He came in while you were away," said Olson. "He's going to have his leg off next week."

I had almost finished Pete's drawing when Curly edged away.

"I gotta get some cigarettes," he murmured.

He headed for the locker beside his bunk. When I looked up from my drawing, Curly was seated in the chair by O'Connor's bed. O'Connor was talking eagerly and they were both smoking. I put the finishing touches on the drawing and began to gather up my materials.

I looked over at Curly. He was standing up. There was a copy of the *Reader's Digest* in his hand. He slapped it down on O'Connor's bed.

"So long," I heard him say. "Take it easy."

I looked up at Olson. He was smoking his pipe and smiling.

CHAPTER III

NINE-TENTHS OF THE WAY

IN OCTOBER THE NEW Protestant chaplain, Lieut. (jg) John Oldman, USNR, arrived at this—his first—assignment, fresh from the Navy's training center for chaplains at Williamsburg. He was an earnest young man with an intelligent face, and the patients, who had a way of summing up people on first sight, liked him from the beginning.

Like Olson, the Chaplain believed that the drawings we made in the wards had therapeutic value. He believed that the average man in the Army or Navy hated most of all the regimentation and loss of his identity. Most of the entertainment in a hospital ward was presented to a group. That was why, he said, the personal approach of an artist had

helped the building up of the individual ego of each man who was sketched. On several occasions a patient who had shut himself away in some private world would open up to an artist just because of that personal approach which, for the time being, restored his ego.

The morale, we found, was the highest wherever the men had suffered the most. In the wards where men lay blind, or with the draining stumps of amputated arms or legs, or with half their faces torn away; in the wards where they alternately shivered and burned with malaria, or ached with rheumatic fever, or sweated in plaster casts; in the wards where the doctors and nurses fought with the aid of drugs or plasma to save men with frightful body burns, and in the wards where men lay for weary months strapped into tractions, the morale was high.

In the neuro-psychiatric wards the patients, their problems and their reactions were entirely different, and the atmosphere of the wards was not the same. Some of the men in these wards were suffering from combat hysteria or shock. Many of them had collapsed after hideous, nerve-racking experiences under fire. On the other hand, there were several who had never seen action, but had cracked up be-

cause of homesickness, anxiety, fear or the strain of military discipline. Their neuroses were not always the direct result of the war. Some of the men I met elsewhere in the hospital who had had shattering experiences were the least shaken by them. Harrigan was one of these examples.

Harrigan was a big red-headed Irishman in one of the other wards whose ship had been sunk under him four times. The last time he had been trapped in the ammunition room for twenty-one hours, with the water up to his chin. He came home from that experience to find that his wife had run away with another man.

"At first," he told me, "I thought about killing that guy. And then I got to thinking, Jesus! I've done enough killing. Let her have her Goddamned 4-F!"

Whenever I mentioned any of the big battles of the South Pacific to Harrigan, he'd say casually: "Sure, I was there."

And I knew he had been, but it hadn't bothered him. He didn't think much of the neuro-psychiatric patients. He couldn't understand them.

"Sure," he said contemptuously, "I know these

NP's. War neuroses, shell shock, combat hysteria, been through hell. Sure, I was there too."

He lit a cigarette with a hand as steady as a rock. He was going back to duty the next day. He had been in the hospital with a bad case of athlete's foot.

All of the NP's reacted differently. Some were nervous and jittery. Others were completely passive. Some spent entire days reading the Bible. A few made cracks about themselves with one eye cocked to see how every one was reacting. Several were creative and wanted to write or paint. Some couldn't concentrate or coordinate either their thoughts or their muscles. They were like advanced cases of paralysis, unable to move their arms or their legs, though there was nothing physically wrong with them. There were those who were actually ill from homesickness. All of them were completely self-involved and tightly incased in some personal armor.

The Chaplain told me that these cases, though not always the direct result of war, were receiving care and treatment which they might never have received as civilians. The best doctors and psychiatrists were doing everything that modern science

and psychiatry could do in all Navy and Army hospitals.

Severe cases were treated in the Physical Therapy (PT) Department by shock appliances, whirlpool baths and massage. As soon as the patients were able, they were assigned to some form of work under the supervision of the Occupational Therapy (OT) Department. A daily schedule, which included a balanced program of treatment, work, recreational and social activities, was arranged for each patient. The work was selected, the Chaplain told me, to fit each individual's interests and strength. There were all types of jobs. The men worked in the laundry, the kitchen, or the library; some of them worked on projects such as a victory garden; others preferred carpentry or machinery in the OT workshop. They studied painting or sculpture with the Red Cross Arts and Skills; a few helped Olson in the Welfare and Recreation Office.

In the wards the men worked with little hand looms weaving belts, or helped the corpsmen by carrying trays to the bed patients or cleaning up the Head. With the exception of the goldbrickers, they all wanted to work. Working kept them from being restless and thinking about themselves.

Biff was not one of these. Biff was an incorrigible. He was about twenty-two, black haired and blue-eyed and restless. He hadn't any family, except a married brother with whom he didn't "get on," and he had drifted from one job to another until he joined the Navy. He had been through the early part of the Italian campaign and he had been to Casablanca, but his neurosis was laid to some early childhood complex or fear which the excitement of war had aggravated, rather than to any direct result of his war experiences. He expected to be discharged, but he wanted to stay in the Navy. His escape was liquor. Every time he went out on liberty, he got drunk. When he was drunk he became violent. When he was sober, he was either feverishly gay or profoundly morose.

The night I drew his picture he was feeling very gay. He sang snatches from "Porgy and Bess," his favorite music. He entertained me with descriptions of Casablanca. He stuck out his lower lip and said in a voice heavy with the Boyer accent:

"Come to the Cas-s-s-bah with Pepe le Moko, *ma petite*, and Pepe will show you *la vie*!"

"My God," sighed the boy in the next bed,

whose name was Andrews, "Biff's got a new audience."

"But not a new act," said one of the boys who was watching the drawing.

"Please hold still," I begged Biff, "I'm drawing your mouth."

He sat up very straight and folded his arms across his chest. The sleeves of his pajama coat were rolled up, and I noticed a row of tattooing marching up each arm. The designs were large and startling. I finished drawing Biff's mouth and started in on his hair.

"Where'd you get the tattooing?" I asked.

"This one," he said, indicating his left arm, "I got in Norfolk when I first joined the Navy." He laughed, remembering. "I didn't start out to get it," he said. "There was a pal of mine who wanted to be tattooed. We had a few drinks first. I don't remember what happened, but I was the guy that got tattooed."

"Didn't it hurt?"

"It hurt like hell the next day. This one," he looked at his right arm, "I had done in Frisco. I knew about that one, though. I had it done pur-

posely to match the other one. Do you know anything about tattooing?"

"No," I admitted.

"This one," he said with pride, showing me the left arm, "was done by Coleman of Norfolk. See the two stars? That's his signature. This one was done by Schultz in Frisco. He uses three stars. They're both tops in their line."

"Hold still for just one minute, Biff."

Biff sighed. He was restless and he hated being quiet. After a while he burst out:

"I've got liberty tomorrow night."

"What are you going to do?" I asked.

"Get drunk."

"Yeah?" murmured Andrews. "You'd better not. You know what Ruthie'll say."

"Ruthie won't say anything," said Biff. "Ruthie's a girl with a heart."

Her name was Evelyn Ruthig, but all the patients called her Ruthie. She was a Pharmacist's Mate, Second Class, and a neuro-psychiatric technician attached to the hospital staff. She knew every boy in the NP wards and most of the boys in the hospital. She listened to the homesick boys who wanted to talk about their mothers, or their wives,

or their girls. She went to movies or dances with them. She discussed the Navy with them. She gave them advice. She held the wolves strictly in line. Every day she went through the NP wards and she was more popular than Betty Grable could ever have been. As Biff had said, Ruthie was a girl with a heart.

Since she knew more about the private lives of the NP's than anyone else in the hospital, I went to her one day with some questions. She looked up from her desk with a smile.

"What can I do for you?" she asked.

"I want to ask you about Gordon," I said.

"Gordon?" She wrinkled her brows thoughtfully. "He's gone, you know. He was discharged and went home."

"Not home," I said. "He's gone, period. You see," I said, "I drew Gordon's picture the night before he left the hospital. I went into the locked ward to draw him. He told me he was being discharged but he didn't say he was going home. He just told me his home was in Pennsylvania somewhere in one of the mining districts. He didn't say much, but somehow I got the impression he

was afraid his girl wouldn't be exactly glad to see him. I felt as if he were a little ashamed."

Ruthie ran her fingers through her hair.

"I know," she said, "a lot of them feel that way. They can't understand there's nothing to be ashamed of. It's just a disease like any other."

"Gordon didn't say anything about it," I said. "He was very quiet. I couldn't tell what he was thinking. I couldn't seem to get to him. I never saw him again. He left the next day, but last week when I went into the ward, Andrews told me that one of the corpsmen had seen him very drunk in Times Square. When the corpsman asked him why he hadn't gone home, Gordon turned on him and snarled, 'I'll be Goddamned if I'll ever go home!' What'll happen to a boy like that, Ruthie?"

Ruthie shook her head.

"I honestly don't know," she said slowly. "He may sleep off his drunk and go home after all. He may find that his family don't know how to talk to him and his girl is disappointed that he came home a neurosis case instead of a wounded hero with a Purple Heart. His friends will be away in the Army or Navy. He may find that the period of adjustment is too hard for him to take and he will

either crack up again or leave home. Of course, he may be one of the lucky ones whose family can bridge the gap and who are able to meet him half way. On the other hand, he may never go home at all."

"But what happens to those boys, Ruthie?" I cried. "Once they've been discharged?"

"Well," said Ruthie, "before they leave the hospital they are interviewed by the Red Cross regarding any personal problems they may have. A representative from the United States Employment Services talks with them about job possibilities, and they are given a letter to their local USES to help them get their old job back or a new job if they prefer. An honorably discharged veteran who served less than sixty days receives \$100; if he served more than sixty days, he receives \$200; if he served sixty days or more outside of the United States, he receives \$300. If he wants to continue his education, which may have been interrupted by the war, he can arrange it through the Educational Department, provided he was under twenty-five when he entered the service. He's entitled to one year in a public or private, elementary or secondary, vocational or business school, or university.

If he completes his one-year course satisfactorily and wants to go on studying, he's entitled to additional training which must not exceed the length of time he was in active service after September 16, 1940. No course can be longer than four years. While he's in school, the Veteran's Administration provides a living allowance of fifty dollars a month, seventy-five for a man with dependents."

"So that," I said, "everything is done for them *before* they leave the hospital."

"Yes," Ruthie answered. "Everything that the Navy or Army, and the Red Cross, and the USES, and the Veterans Administration can do to fit the honorably discharged veteran back into civilian life is done. Discharged patients are checked up for a period of ninety days after they leave the hospital."

"Then the only unknown quantity facing the veteran is his family or friends?"

"Yes, and when they go home it depends on their families as to what happens."

"Doesn't it depend on them, too?" I asked.

"Of course," said Ruthie. "Everything depends on them in the long run. When someone is sick everything depends on his reaction to treatment, but a good deal depends on the treatment. These



By WILLARD FAIRCHILD



By WALLACE MORGAN



By WILLIAM OBERHARDT



By WALLACE MORGAN



By ARTHUR WILLIAM BROWN



By GERTRUDE WHITING



By AURILLA ASCHENBACH



By PRUETT CARTER



By KAY KENNY



By CHARLES HAWES



By RAY PROHASKA



By FRANK BENSING



By DOROTHY NOREY



By JOHN HOLMGREN



By DAVID MILLARD



By WILLIAM PACHNER



By HENRIETTA SHARON



By K. VOIGTLANDER



By GRAHAM KAYE



By NORMAN MINGO



*Last of seeds to stand
from John Post*

By JOHN POST



By ROY WILSON



By TED WITHERS



By DONALD TEAGUE



By ANN SCHABBEAR



By ANN SCHABBEHAR



By ANN SCHABBEHAR

boys are sick—except for the goldbrickers. They need treatment—the right kind of treatment. They need to let the sun into their minds and hearts. You see, they haven't had the release you sometimes get from a physical illness. They're closed away behind a kind of wall. It takes infinite patience and understanding to break through that wall. That's where the family has to apply treatment. The boy has to respond, of course, but the family has to go nine-tenths of the way. Adjustment to civilian life is hard at best," said Ruthie. "I know that it is for me when I go home on leave. I'm restless and actually unhappy. I find that civilians seem different. I don't know what to talk to my family about and I can hardly wait to get back to duty. If, added to that, I had thought myself into some blind alley and had been discharged from the Navy I don't know what I'd do."

"Gordon wasn't a goldbricker, was he?" I asked.

"No, Gordon wasn't," said Ruthie. "He had a genuine problem that, combined with the Navy, was too big for him. It was a family problem and no one could solve it but Gordon and his family. Did you know Wade?" she asked.

I thought back. Wade was the first boy I had

sketched in the neuro-psychiatric ward. He had a thin, attractive face, blond hair and grey eyes. I had liked him immediately, but he hadn't responded at all. He had been completely passive. He just hadn't cared whether I drew him or not. Somebody told me that he had come from Alabama, had been a teacher, graduated with honors from two universities, was brilliant, sensitive and high strung and after six months in the Navy had simply gone to pieces. The night I drew him he sat, eyes cast down, quietly working on a small hand loom.

"What are you making?" I had asked.

"A belt."

"For your wife?"

"Yes."

"Is she from Alabama?"

"No, Kentucky."

"My mother is from Kentucky."

He had been polite, but far away.

"Yes," I said to Ruthie, "I remember Wade. What about him?"

"Wade isn't trying to readjust himself," said Ruthie. "He isn't making any effort at all. He finds it easier to drift along. His wife did everything pos-

sible. She took a room near the hospital to be near him. She came to see him, she encouraged him, she took him home when he was discharged." Ruthie shook her head. "But I don't know," she said, "what'll happen to Wade."

"Sometimes," I said, "it takes such a little thing to reach them. Just one little thing will do the trick. There was a man I sketched in that same ward the first night I went there. I can't even remember his name now. He didn't stay long and I never got to know him very well. I heard the story about him later from Olson."

"What happened?" asked Ruthie.

Nothing much had happened at the time. It was the story I heard later that had stunned me. It was my second trip to the hospital, and my first visit to the psychopathic ward. The ward was an open one and it was filled with movement and noise. Some of the boys were lying on their beds, but they were fully dressed. They were all ambulatory cases.

There was a kind of tension when I first went in, and they kept away from me until I began to draw Wade. Then, presently, I was conscious of a ring of men silently watching. I looked up into a boy-

ish, snub-nosed little face with a sprinkling of freckles on a short nose. His blue eyes tried to escape, but I held them inexorably. He reddened and laughed.

"We're nuts, you know," he said airily. "See?"

He leaned over my head, carefully removed something between his thumb and the third finger of his right hand, then flung up his hand as if releasing some winged creature.

"Butterflies," he said.

They all laughed except Wade, who went on making his belt.

"Didn't they tell you we were nuts?" asked a sailor with a long, solemn face and sad eyes.

"Didn't they tell you I was?" I asked. "Artists, you know . . ."

For some reason, that lightened the tension. Everybody began to talk. I had almost finished drawing Wade when the nurse came up to me.

"One of our patients would like to be sketched," she said. She pointed to a man at the other end of the ward. "He's been with us for nearly two months," she explained, "and we haven't been able to get him interested in anything. Not even shaving," she smiled. "He had quite a beard but he was

so anxious to have his picture made and to look his best for his wife that he shaved off his beard and combed his hair. Do you think you could do him next?"

He was an ordinary sort of man. Nothing unusual about him except for the fact that both hands were bandaged. He didn't say very much. Later I was to wish I had talked with him more, had asked his name. At the time I had no idea that there was any significance about drawing this particular man.

I heard the story six weeks later from Olson. The man had been in a fire at sea and his hands had been badly burned. The flesh and some of the bone had been eaten away. The doctors had done a particularly skillful job of bone and skin grafting and the patient was nearly cured, but not in his own mind. Nothing would induce him to use his hands because he was convinced they were useless. Even various forms of occupational therapy failed. He became morose and was finally moved to the psychopathic ward. He let his beard grow on the plea that he couldn't shave himself.

For one reason or another that first night I went into the ward, he wanted to have his picture drawn. Some latent pride, I suppose, made him want to

look his best for his wife. Perhaps she hadn't seen him with his beard. Perhaps she didn't know about the ward he was in. What he thought about, I will never know. But whatever it was, he marched himself into the Head and with the "useless" hands shaved off his beard, then sat for his portrait. From that time on he began to use his hands, and a month or so afterward he went back to sea duty.

"I never heard that story before," said Ruthie, "but I wasn't here then. That sort of thing can happen and does, though—I know. You never know what little spark will awaken interest in someone. Sometimes something like that does the trick where all the patience and care and understanding have failed. But the reason anything works at all is that the patient makes an effort. You may have gone nine-tenths of the way, but he had to take the final step to meet you."

"You're doing a wonderful job with Biff," I said. "He's much better. He doesn't drink so much."

"Oh, Biff!" said Ruthie. She sighed and shook back her short dark hair. "Biff got drunk the other night. He's been locked up for two days. He was quite violent."

"I'm so sorry. I didn't know. What will you do with him next?" I asked.

She looked at me and smiled a tired little smile.

"Oh, start all over again, I guess," she said patiently.

As Biff himself had said, Ruthie was a girl with a heart.

* * *

It was the Chaplain who introduced me to Jerry. Jerry was in one of the NP wards. One Thursday evening when we all filed into the Chaplain's office, I noticed a yellow-haired boy in blues talking to Olson. I thought perhaps he was one of the sailors on the staff who were detailed on Thursday nights to escort the artists to their various wards. There were four of us that night, Willard Fairchild, Victor de Pauw, Wallace Morgan and myself, and we all stood inside the doorway of the Chaplain's office waiting for assignments. As usual, we were to return to the same wards, because there were always several boys whom we had promised to draw "the next time." While Olson was assigning everybody to his ward, the Chaplain drew me aside.

"I want you to meet one of our neuro-psychiatric patients," he indicated the boy in blues standing

beside Olson. "He is interested in art; in fact, he does some drawing himself, and he is very anxious to have his picture sketched. He is badly shaken up and hasn't any self-confidence now, and I thought maybe a drawing would help. But he is too self-conscious to pose for you in the ward, so would you mind doing it here?"

"Of course not."

"Jerry," called the Chaplain, "will you come over here a minute?"

Jerry came over and acknowledged the introduction shyly.

"I'll take you into the Chapel," said the Chaplain. "You can work there undisturbed."

It was very quiet in the Chapel. Jerry sat down across the aisle from me in one of the pews, and I took out my materials and began to draw. He had an interesting face, deep-set blue eyes under thick blond brows, a straight nose, a long firm jaw and a thin sensitive mouth. It was a serious face, a little austere and not much given to laughter.

His background, the Chaplain told me later, accounted for his face. He came from a little town in Tennessee, a stern, God-fearing Methodist community. He didn't drink or smoke or swear, so he

had had a difficult time in the Navy. He had left high school to enlist and he had been in service for a year. Part of that time he had been in England.

He didn't get on very well with his shipmates, because every time he went on liberty with some new friend, he found that his friend wanted to spend the evening in some bar or pub, drinking. Even the girls that he met drank or smoked. He couldn't understand that; his girl at home didn't. He was very unhappy. He had one sense of values, and everybody else seemed to have another. He held on desperately to the things he believed. He knew in his heart that they were right. He tried to do his job, but everything went wrong. Even when he was sent to the Brooklyn Naval Hospital, he clung to the belief that he *could* do a job again if given the chance and he kept on trying. But when he learned that he was going to be discharged as unfit for duty, he gave up. He was sure then that he was worthless. He had failed the Navy, he had failed himself, he wasn't any good to anyone.

He was in this mood when Dr. Campbell sent him to the Chaplain. Dr. Campbell was Lieut. Helen Campbell (HC) USNRWR, a former professor of psychology at Swarthmore College, who

was a psychometrist attached to the hospital staff.

"See what you can do for him," she had said to the Chaplain. "He is a very religious boy, and I think he might listen to you."

The Chaplain found out that Jerry had two interests, drawing and planes. He decided to try and reach him first through the former.

Jerry and I talked a good deal about art that night as I drew his picture. I asked him to show me some of his work and he instantly produced some carefully folded pieces of paper from his breast pocket. He had brought them along to show me, but was too shy to speak of them himself. The drawings, which had been made with a pencil on scraps of writing paper, were surprisingly good. My enthusiasm was sincere, and Jerry was considerably buoyed up by it. I left him my sketch pad and drawing materials with instructions to draw his ward mates and have something to show me by next Thursday.

But he couldn't wait until Thursday. He called me over the week end. He had made some sketches and he had liberty that night. Could he come over and see me? I told him to come over about eight. He arrived breathless at seven-thirty.

The new drawings were even better than the first ones. They had an amazing amount of feeling and life in them. We had a long evening discussing art. Jerry drew my picture and studied my art books and the framed sketches and paintings on the walls. After we had exhausted art, we ate little frosted cakes and drank Coca-Cola. Altogether, it was a very successful evening.

I saw Jerry several times after that before he left the hospital. He seemed much happier. This was due to his girl. He had been worried about her, the Chaplain had told me. She had been his girl all through high school. Now, he was sure that she wouldn't want to be his girl any longer. She would be ashamed of him.

"I don't think you're being fair to her," the Chaplain said. "You ought to give her a chance. Write her a letter and explain the whole story. Then let her make the decision."

Jerry showed her answer to the Chaplain. She said she didn't care about anything else so long as he was safe and well. When was he coming home? When were they going to get married? Jerry walked on air after that. He went out on liberty one day and bought a ring.

The only thing he was still a little worried about was what kind of job he was fitted for. He hadn't finished high school. He hadn't studied enough art to make a profession of it. He had made model planes in school and won prizes with them and he liked to design them but that wasn't much of a background for the right kind of job.

Then the Chaplain had a brainstorm.

"Didn't you tell me," he asked Jerry, "that your married sister lives in California?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, how about going to live with her in California—after, of course, you've been home to see your girl and your family. You could get a job with the Lockheed plant. They teach employees, who are interested, courses in drafting. You could learn to design planes and work into a good job doing what you want to do. Then, if you wanted to, you could go to night school and finish your high school course. Why wouldn't that be a good idea?"

Jerry telephoned me before he left and told me about it. Everything, he thought, was going to work out. Maybe he wasn't such a failure after all. The Chaplain had said that he wasn't; he had said that he was just in the wrong job. If he got a job

in the Lockheed plant, he wouldn't feel so badly about letting the Navy down because he would still be helping the war effort. He was going to go on drawing the way I had shown him. He had sent the drawing I had made of him to his girl and she liked it. He wanted to thank me for everything and say good-bye.

As Ruthie said, Jerry's girl, and the Chaplain, and Dr. Campbell, had done their part. They had gone "nine-tenths of the way" to meet him. But Jerry had done his part, too. He had gone one-tenth of the way himself. There was nothing to worry about now. Jerry was going to be all right.

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CHAPTER IV

THE GUY IN THE NEXT BED

IN OCTOBER WE BEGAN TO work at St. Albans Naval Hospital. This was another of Lieut. Heininger's arrangements. The hospital, he told me over the phone, wanted me to bring a group of artists on Monday night, the 18th of October.

I telephoned Wallace Morgan and Willard Fairchild.

"Would you like," I asked them, "to break ground with me at St. Albans Hospital next Monday night?"

They said they would.

St. Albans Naval Hospital is on Long Island, beyond Jamaica, and is about a three-quarters of an hour's drive from the Vanderbilt. But it took us

twice as long to get there that first night because the driver, who was from the New York Chapter of the Red Cross Motor Corps, lost her way.

In October, 1943, Long Island was still blacked out and the streets were so dark we couldn't read the names on the street signs. To add to the difficulties, it had begun to rain. It was seven-thirty when we finally turned in at the gates of the hospital. We stopped by the sentry box, and a big Marine walked over to the car. He peered in at the driver in her Red Cross uniform.

"You want Red Cross headquarters, ma'am?" he asked.

"Yes, please."

"Building 46."

"But where —?"

He gestured eloquently.

"Just over that rise, turn to your left, then another left under a bridge and Building 46's on your left in the middle. You can't miss it."

"Oh, can't we?" muttered Willard.

The hospital sprawled out, long and low. Blacked out, the one-story, white wooden buildings looked like an abandoned Army barracks. We squinted at

them through the rain. After Brooklyn, this seemed enormous.

"It's so big," murmured Wally, depressed.

It took us fifteen minutes to find Building 46. We discovered the bridge we had to drive under by a simple process of eliminating all the other roads, but, having passed under it, bewildering rows of low white buildings stretched out on our left. No one could read the numbers on them. The driver was tired. She had been driving an ambulance all day, transporting the wounded from hospital ships and planes to hospitals around New York. She had had no dinner and wouldn't be through driving us until after ten o'clock, but she was still game. She slowed to a stop and switched off the ignition.

"Let's walk," she suggested, "from now on."

As the Marine had said, Building 46 proved to be the middle building. We followed the driver inside. She marched along with assurance, seeming to know now just where she was going. At the entrance to the Red Cross office stood two girls in the grey uniforms of recreation workers.

"Here they are," said the driver, a note of triumph struggling with the weariness in her voice. "Here are the artists."

"My goodness!" exclaimed one of the Red Cross workers, the pretty little dark one. "My goodness, but you're late!"

"Yes," said the other one, the blond girl. She looked at her watch. "You won't have much time to work. I am Miss Barger," she went on, "and this is Miss Emory, Miss Sharon. Will you come along with us?"

We followed dutifully, but before we could get beyond the door of the office we were surrounded by men, hundreds of them. To avoid being knocked down, we were forced to lean back against the wall.

"What's going on?" I gasped. "Is the Hospital being evacuated?"

"Oh, no," said Miss Barger indulgently. "The boys are just coming from the movies."

They looked like an advancing army, except that they were not grim. They went by on crutches or on canes. Some of them were in wheelchairs. A few of them carried their arms in slings. One boy had a patch over one eye, another wore dark glasses and leaned on a cane. Still another held his head stiffly in a plaster cast which supported his chin. They wore working khaki or blues. Some of them were in bathrobes. Now and then someone sported a

hat tilted at a rakish angle. There was a sprinkling of Marines. One of these wore the patch of the famous First Division on his sleeve. Several Waves went by arm in arm. There were a lot of Negroes, and I noticed one Chinese boy whose empty sleeve was pinned to his shirt.

The noise was deafening, made by the clatter of feet, the tap of canes or crutches and the rumbling of wheelchairs over the bare wooden floor. There was a steady stream of conversation and laughter. A trio went by arm in arm singing, "I want a paper doll that I can call my own."

"Cut out the paper doll," admonished a gangling Marine who was treading on their heels.

Two sailors on crutches took up the refrain. One carried his leg stiffly in a plaster cast, the other had had one leg amputated.

"A paper doll that I can call my own," they chanted.

"Jesus! I hate that song," groaned the Marine, "especially the way you guys sing it."

The two sailors turned and holding their crutches like machine guns leveled them at the Marine.

"A-a-a-a-a-a-a-a!" they snarled.

A negro boy in a wheelchair made an arc around them.

"Gangway!" he yelled good-naturedly.

The stream of traffic moved on but it was thinning out.

"I think we can go on now," said Miss Barger.

A long, dim corridor stretched ahead of us. We couldn't see the end of it.

"The boys call this Broadway," explained Miss Emory, "and the crossroads up ahead is Forty-second Street."

At intervals along Broadway was a telephone booth. In the blacked out halls the lights in the booths gave them a theatrical prominence. Each one was like a small stage, and each one was occupied, with a line of impatient boys, most of them in pajamas and bathrobes, waiting on the outside.

In one booth two sailors were wedged. The short fat one was shouting into the telephone. The thin redheaded one was talking to a third sailor who leaned nonchalantly against the outside of the booth with his hat perched jauntily over one eye. He was long and lean, with a lock of unruly dark hair hanging down under his cap. He was thumbing a small address book unconcernedly. The little

fat sailor was shouting so loudly that instinctively we slowed up to hear what he was saying.

"Aw, c'mon, honey," he was bawling into the phone. "Shut up, you guys," he yelped exasperatedly over his shoulder. "I can't hear you, Peaches. What'dju say? Hello—hello—hello—!"

He turned a bewildered face to the other two.

"She hung up on me," he said in an injured voice.

"Any girl in her right mind would," said the long, dark-haired boy in a drawl fresh from Georgia.

He gestured with his thumb eloquently.

"Out!" he said succinctly. He waved the small address book. "Ah'm takin' ovah from now on. By eight o'clock tomorrow night," he prophesied, "the babes will be waitin' foh us at the Astoh bah or mah name ain't Beauregard."

"I'll bet his name is Beauregard," said Wally.

We turned left at Forty-second Street and went into a ward on our right. It was a large ward, and the bright lights dazzled us after the dimness of the corridor.

The ward was much bigger than those at Brooklyn. Added to the long row of beds against each wall, a third row of beds ran down the middle aisle. These were placed with the head of one bed at the

foot of the next, each one being separated by a small bedside table.

Each bed in all the hospitals had a small bedside table beside it with a drawer and a compartment below. This was the patient's locker. It was completely and sacredly his, it was his home and his castle, it contained all his possessions and his secrets, it was the only privacy he had except for his thoughts. He kept his gear in the locker compartment, his writing material and personal belongings in the drawer. On the locker top he set the picture of his mother, or his girl, or his wife. Sometimes he supplemented this with a picture of his children, if he had any, or his home. He kept his ash tray and cigarettes on the locker, and often there was a box of candy or cookies from home, which everybody dipped into without any false shyness.

If he had a radio, that, too, was on the locker, and probably was tuned in to a program of hot music, while the radio of his neighbor on the right was turned on to a news broadcast, and the radio of his neighbor on the left was broadcasting recordings of symphonic music. When the P.A. was broadcasting, he usually turned his radio off. The P.A. was the Public Address system of the hospital.

It was used for special announcements and tuned into all the wards from a main office in the hospital. It was also used to broadcast visiting stage shows from the recreation hall.

The patient's days were much the same in every hospital. The ward awoke at six-thirty. Breakfast was served in the mess hall. If he was a bed patient, his meals were served on a tray by the nurse, the corpsman (or ward boy in Army hospitals), or a fellow patient who had been assigned to duty in the ward. Sick call was at 10:30. The evening sick call was a routine checkup which fell to the lot of the doctors who were Officers of the Day, or O.D.'s, but the morning sick call was very thorough and was performed by each medical officer in his own particular ward. After sick call, the patient reported to whatever department suited his particular needs. If he was still a bed patient, the treatment was given him in bed, behind a screen if it required privacy. Here he received injections of various drugs, or blood transfusions, or changes of bandages or packings, or massage.

If he was well enough, he performed certain duties to which he had been assigned; these included washing and ironing his clothes. If he re-

mained in bed, he read books which were brought to him by the traveling library, a sort of push cart, or he wrote letters home. If he was too sick to write, Red Cross Grey ladies wrote the letters for him.

Dinner, as it is called in the Army or Navy was at eleven-thirty.

In the afternoon, the bed patient slept or studied books from the Educational Department. This Department provided courses in every subject which might interest a student. There were easy language books published by the Armed Forces Institute. There were courses in mathematics, history, science, medicine and philosophy. If a patient wanted a higher rating, he sometimes used his free time to study for it. If he had been able to finish high school, he could take the necessary courses to acquire a degree. If he was going to be discharged, he could study for a trade or a profession. If he was a college graduate, he could earn extra liberty by tutoring other patients.

Some part of each man's day was spent on Occupational Therapy. The object of O.T. was to restore the function to disabled joints or muscles, to build up physical fitness, to develop interest, and—often—to fit a man to take up a job after his dis-

charge. O.T. was prescribed for the patient before he could sit up, and he was given bedside occupations of all kinds.

When he was able, he went to the O.T. Workshop for a certain period every day. His special needs, as recommended by the ward medical officer, were studied. For example, if he had an arm injury, he was given a job which stretched the limb and muscles needing treatment. If his interest was machinery, he was assigned to some job where he could handle machinery and use his injured arm at the same time. If, for instance, he had a finger or two missing, he learned to type and gradually was typing all his letters home, where before he had been unable to grip a pen.

In the Physical Therapy Department he was given whirlpool and paraffin baths, or massage, or dry heat or cold, or ultraviolet radiation, or X-ray, or muscle training, or exercise. When he finished his duties or treatment, he was free to go to the recreation hall, to play the piano, listen to the victrola, or play ping pong. If the weather was good, he could take a sunbath in the hospital grounds or play a game of tennis. If there was a gymnasium, he could get a workout. He could go to the library

which was filled with books and some of the latest magazines and newspapers. He could model with clay, or paint with oils or water colors in the Red Cross Arts and Skills Workshop. Or he could repair to Ship's Service (the PX in an Army Hospital) which sold everything from razor blades to ice cream. Here he could drink a milk shake while making his purchases and bring back ice cream, sandwiches, or cokes to his bedridden bunk mates.

Supper was served at four-thirty. After supper, there was a movie in the recreation hall, or a Red Cross or USO show. In the wards the men played cards, checkers, read, listened to the radio, or talked and smoked an endless chain of cigarettes. Sometimes a celebrity would visit the ward. Nine o'clock was bedtime.

Saturday and Sunday afternoons were given over to visiting hours for families or friends. Visitors and letters from home are the biggest events in the lives of the bedridden men. They read and re-read the letters. Sometimes they read bits of them to another patient, or a nurse, or to one of the artists. If there are snapshots enclosed, they want to show them to someone. But even a letter can't compete with the visit of someone from home.

I have seen these visitors, usually a wife or a mother, sitting by the bed of a patient. She will sit there all afternoon holding the patient's hand, not talking much, just looking at him. Sometimes he will rest an arm on her shoulders, and there will be a short flurry of conversation. Sometimes he will drift into sleep still holding her hand. Somewhere during the visit he will introduce her proudly to the other patients. His favorite nurse comes up and tells his wife gaily that he is the worst wolf in the ward, and although she and the wife may already share the knowledge that he is going to die, they laugh together and commiserate with one another over the wolfishness of all men, while the patient watches them both in a kind of happy daze. Long after the wife or mother has gone, a bouquet of flowers or a box of homemade cookies stands on the table by the bed to mark her visit.

When the visitor is a father, he and the patient are more self-conscious. The father sits by the bed holding his hat awkwardly, and there is a good deal of boisterous conversation. He is introduced to the patient's pals, proceeds to tell them about the last war. The nurse tells the father what a wolf he has for a son, and the patient tells the nurse what a wolf

he has for a father. The leave-taking is as gay and casual as the visit. But, for a long time afterward, the patient's conversation is larded with references to—"When my dad was here the other day . . ."

When the patient is an ambulatory case (ambulatory cases are patients who can get around on crutches or in wheelchairs), the story is different. He gets special leave and takes his girl or wife in town to do the night spots—he has saved up all his back pay for this. If the visitors are his parents, mother and dad take him in town for a show and a swell feed. But what every ambulatory patient aims for is that thirty-day leave spent at home.

Every day the Catholic, Jewish and Protestant chaplains alternate in paying a personal visit to each patient, giving particular attention to the bedridden men who cannot attend church services.

A Catholic chaplain at an Army hospital told me that a very small percentage of the patients attended his Sunday Mass. He said that articles in magazines and newspapers stressed the fact that the men were turning to religion, but that he had not found it so. "They are opposed to organized religion," he said. "They don't want ritual or formalism. They are not religious but," he added, "they are deeply spiritual."

I heard the same story from other chaplains. A Protestant chaplain told me that the men didn't care much about words or preaching. "But they believe in God," he said. "We can't keep them in Bibles."

By November we had settled down to a routine; St. Albans every Monday night, Brooklyn every Thursday night. The group of artists was growing. Willard Fairchild brought along Ruth Rodgers, who had a husband in the Navy somewhere in the South Pacific. Wally Morgan brought John Holmgren and Bill Pachner. Ann Schabbeher, whose fiancé was in India with the RAF, joined us. Others who came were Travis Cliett, Jean Robins, Charles Hawes, Ray Prohaska, Berj Gary, E. Franklin Wittmack, Frank Bensing and his daughter, Punkie, John Vickery, Kay Kenny and Aurilla Aschenbach, and Edward Steese, Chairman of the Artists for Victory, sent some of the artists in his group.

There were all different types of artists: illustrators; portrait painters; fashion designers; those who did commercial work in advertising firms; and cartoonists. A very few were amateurs. The one denominator they had to have in common was the ability to make a good likeness into a portrait draw-

ing. If they could do that it didn't matter whether they were cartoonists or painters, amateurs or professionals, as long as they sacrificed their own professional (or amateur) approach to art and did the job at hand.

We had found some months after we had started work in the hospitals that the patients wanted copies of the drawings, so we started to photostat them. Each artist paid for the photostating of his or her drawings, and the patient received the original to send home, with a print and a negative for himself. Many of the patients had copies made from the negative and sent them to girl friends as Christmas presents. One of the boys asked an artist to please write on the drawing, "To the One and Only," and then asked if he could have ten copies!

One Thursday night the whole staff of Superman—ten of them, including Joe Shuster, artist-creator of the famous comic strip, went with me to the Brooklyn Naval Hospital. I had gone to the *Superman* office one day during my lunch hour and told them the story. They all agreed to go. Harry Childs, in charge of publicity for *Superman*, made the arrangements (incidentally, without benefit of publicity). Seven staff artists, Harry Childs, Joe Shuster

himself, and the editor came along. They brought a hundred and fifty comic magazines and a hundred and fifty cartons of cigarettes to give to the men.

The patients learned how comics were made. They had their pictures drawn with their own heads and *Superman* bodies. Modest little Joe Shuster took the wards by storm. If this was *Superman*, they were Gods.

All my spare time was spent in calling artists. Most of them were eager to try it. Occasionally somebody would say, "Oh, I couldn't go into a hospital. I'm too tender-hearted."

Everyone went for the first time under the impression that they would find the hospitals depressing and were surprised when they didn't.

Sometimes an artist would say to me in a worried voice, "I'm a 4-F, you know—my eyes—but I look perfectly healthy. Won't they resent me?"

But the boys never did, they felt only gratitude as long as the artist was sincere and the drawing was good.

Sometimes an artist would say, "But I wouldn't know what to talk about. What will I say to them?"

After the first visit, no one gave that problem another thought. There was so much to talk about

—the patient's wife, his girl, his home town, or how the artist had gotten started in his profession. If the patient wasn't talkative that didn't matter either; the artist just concentrated on his job.

Sometimes an artist would say to me, "But how could I work in a hospital with all the distractions and the bad lights?" That problem was solved only by getting used to the surroundings. At first the noise, the talkative audience of kibitzers, the laughing patient (somebody was always making him laugh) and the dim center lights were disturbing. But, after the artist had gone to the hospital several times, he found that all of these little difficulties became just a part of the job. He got into a certain rhythm. He began to sacrifice style and an artistic drawing to getting a likeness. He developed a routine, according to his speed, and turned out anywhere from two to five drawings a night. Often for a very sick patient, who couldn't sit long, he made a "quickie." For the foreshortened drawings, where a man was flat in bed, he developed a technique. I always had to stand up to draw a bed patient because I was too short to see him when I sat down. Sometimes a patient wanted to be drawn in a uniform, complete with hat and insignia. The one

objective was to please the patient. That was all that mattered.

I found that women artists asked the least questions. Their imaginations and sympathies seized upon the idea and they came without any persuading.

We all had our favorite hospitals. Brooklyn was always mine. This was partly because I had started there and partly because at Brooklyn I went regularly to the same ward and the men in that ward had become my friends.

At St. Albans, which most of the artists preferred because it was newer, bigger and—they claimed—more stimulating, the routine was different. The hospital was so big and there were so many wards to cover that we rarely went into the same ward twice. It was not until the middle of winter that I began to put roots into one particular ward. It was a surgical ward specializing in bone grafting. It was in this ward that I met Eddie.

Eddie came from New Orleans. He was very dark, with the blue blackness of the full-blooded Negro. He was tall and even in his wheelchair he gave the impression of standing erect. The night I drew his picture the first thing I noticed was the

sweetness in his face—that and the way he crinkled it up to laugh. They were hard qualities to capture on paper and, as they were characteristic of Eddie, the drawing didn't have his spirit.

I was disappointed with it, but he seemed pleased. When I signed the drawing he gave me his name. It was a French name, musical and flowing. I pronounced it as I wrote it and Eddie laughed.

“That's right,” he said delightedly. “That's just right. You should hear what the Navy does to it.”

Eddie had been a gunner on a mine sweeper. The mine sweeper had been blown up in the Mediterranean, and Eddie was just completing his fifth month with his leg in a plaster cast.

One of the Red Cross recreation workers told me Eddie was a hero, that he had saved the lives of several men aboard his ship. But Eddie didn't mention it.

“When the explosion came,” said Eddie, “I was blown up fifteen feet in the air. I landed on the deck with an awful crash.”

“Didn't it knock you out?”

“No,” said Eddie, “it was funny, it didn't. I kept wondering why. I just laid there wondering why it didn't. Blood was gushing out of my leg and out

of my hand. I was lying in a pool of blood. I never saw anything like it before. The deck was inches deep in blood. There was a guy lying on top of me and he was screaming. I couldn't even see who he was. There was another guy lying several feet away. Half of his face was shot off but I recognized him—Swanson, one of the gunners. I heard somebody shout that the ship was going down and I said to myself, 'Eddie, this is it.' I don't rightly remember how they got us off but they did—all of us. I saw the ship go down. You know, it was funny," Eddie said in his soft voice, "I was glad to see the ship go down—all of that blood and all—I was glad to see it go down.

"They took us off at Bizerte and laid us on the docks. Ours wasn't the only ship that had been blown up, so there were boatloads of guys being brought in. The docks were covered with blood, too. Doctors and nurses were going among the wounded. I was afraid they would amputate my leg—it was broken in several places—and they were doing a lot of amputating to save guys from dying. I figured maybe I wasn't going to die after all. I just laid there thinking. It was funny how I kept thinking about God. It seemed as if thinking about God

was the only thing I could do. It seemed then as if I'd gotten down to cases for the first time in my life, and the only real things were life and death and God. Everything else was kind of wrapped around with maybes. Maybe they'd save my leg. Maybe I wouldn't die. Maybe I'd go home. God was the only sure thing in the world.

"They put me in a hospital in Bizerte. Then after a while they moved me to another hospital in Oran. I was pretty sick. I was in three other hospitals before they sent me back to the United States. It was good to be back," said Eddie. "It was good to be alive."

"Did you go home?" I asked.

"Sure, I got a leave and went home for Christmas. I was glad to see my family. I hadn't seen them for two years."

"Are you married, Eddie?"

"No," said Eddie. "As long as I'm like this, I'm glad I haven't any responsibilities. After the war, maybe—doggone!" he exclaimed, laughing, "there's that maybe again."

"What will you do after the war?" I asked.

"I don't know. But I want to get back into service. I want to get back until it's over."

"Most of them feel like that," I said.

"Sure," said Eddie, "I know I hate war and I'll be glad when it's over. Seems like whenever I think of war I think of that deck covered with blood and I feel the way I felt when I saw my ship go down. But I want to be in it until it's over. I think the other guys feel like that. Most of us feel the same way about things."

"I know," I said. "I've noticed that. I've noticed that closeness between you, the way you share things, the way you build each other up."

"Sure," said Eddie. "It happens that way. Shep says nobody can build you up like the guy in the next bed."

Shep was the big blond Texan who shared the room with Eddie and O'Hara, a boy from Boston, who was on leave. Shep was paralyzed and had been in bed for ten months. Tonight they had taken him to the movies in a wheelchair.

"Last week," Eddie went on, "one of the movie stars was making personal appearances in the hospital. He came through the wards and he stopped in here. He was telling jokes and talking a lot. When he left, I asked Shep if he thought he was funny. Shep said no, he didn't, but he laughed

because he had to be polite and because the guy was trying so hard. Shep said, 'I had to give the guy a break. I had to kind of build up his morale, but I'd rather hear one of your corny old jokes, Eddie.' Shep didn't mean that I was really as funny as the movie star was," Eddie added hastily. "It was just that he liked to hear my corn and I liked to hear his, kind of as if it was all in the family. You see what I mean?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes," I said. "I see what you mean."

But Eddie wasn't satisfied.

"It isn't," said Eddie, "that Shep didn't appreciate what the other guy was trying to do. But it's like I was saying. The things you find out about life and death and God—you can't talk about them to a lot of people. Sometimes you can't even talk to your family and it all gets to kind of burning inside you. The only people you can spill it to are the other guys. When you're talking seriously they understand because they believe the same things you do and when you're cracking wise they laugh because they think the same things are funny. You know," said Eddie softly, "I've been thinking about it and it's all like Shep says. It's a funny thing but nobody can build you up like the guy in the next bed."

CHAPTER V

CHRISTMAS

THE THURSDAY BEFORE Christmas was the twenty-third. That night I worked in the "Dirty Surgery" ward at the Brooklyn Naval Hospital. It was very festive. In the sunroom at the end of the ward stood a lighted Christmas tree and on the locker beside every bed glowed a poinsettia plant.

"Dirty Surgery," Olson had told me, treated infections that could be cured by surgery. It was in the "Dirty Surgery" ward that I met the Chief. The Chief had had cellulitis, and the infection had settled in his lip. I had seen him in the ward several times, but he had always been a little shy of me and usually kept in the background. Tonight, however, he came over to wish me a Merry Christmas.

"Chief," I said, "I'd like to draw your picture."
The Chief looked self-conscious.

"You don't want to draw me," he murmured.

"It'll break your pencil," drawled Whitey from the next bed, where he was playing a game of solitaire, "a mug like the Chief's."

"There's my lip, too," explained the Chief, "it don't look so good."

His lip was healing from an operation and was swollen out of proportion.

"I wouldn't want my wife to see it like this," he said. "She'd be too worried about it."

"It's an improvement, Chief," said Whitey, dealing himself a new game. "It does something for your special style of beauty."

"Tell you what we'll do with the picture, Chief," called a thin dark boy, with a scarred face, from a bed on the other side of the ward. "We'll hang it in the Head."

"I'll draw your lip the way it'll look when it heals," I suggested.

"You don't want to draw an old fellow like me," persisted the Chief, but his tone teetered on the brink of acceptance.

"I do," I assured him honestly, "I do very much."

"Go on, Chief," urged Whitey, laying a black Jack on a red Queen, "don't be so bashful."

"Well," said the Chief reluctantly.

He sat down on his bed.

"Shall I sit here?" he asked.

I sat down in the chair by the Chief's bed and began to draw. Whitey leaned on one elbow to watch, and the boy with the scarred face, whose name was Fraoli, strolled over and perched on the foot of Whitey's bed. Two others who had been playing a game of gin rummy stopped playing and came over to watch. The Chief was a great favorite. As a sign of his popularity, he was deluged with abuse and insults. His beefy red face deepened, his little blue eyes gleamed and the impression of a smirk curled the corners of his swollen lips.

"Will any of you get home for Christmas?" I asked.

"Fraoli's goin' home," said Whitey.

"How wonderful. Where are you from?" I asked Fraoli.

He looked embarrassed.

"Brooklyn," he admitted, then joined in the general laughter.

Whitey reached over and picked up my bottle of fixative.

"What's this?" he asked.

"It keeps my drawings from rubbing," I explained.

He sniffed it. "Alcohol!" he exclaimed. "Is it good to drink?"

"It would probably kill you," I said.

"Not me," he said. "It'd take more than that to kill me, sister."

I looked at him and felt sure that it would. He was over six feet tall, with the shoulders of a football player, a heavy rugged face topped by a shock of thick tow hair. His right leg was in a plaster cast and a crutch leaned against his bed.

"Remember the time you drank that rubbing alcohol, Whitey?" chimed in Fraoli.

Whitey nodded.

"Sure," he said, reflectively, "I drained it through three slices of bread to get the green stuff out and then drank it. It was Okay, too," he added.

"I done that aboard ship once," the Chief admitted, "but it don't give you the kick like drinkin' whiskey through a tube."

"Why drink it through a tube?" I asked.

The Chief indicated his lip apologetically. "I

have to use a glass tube to drink through," he explained, "and last night when I went on liberty I took it along. That whiskey sure tasted sweet through the tube." The Chief's face assumed a reminiscent gleam. "Yessiree, it gave me a bigger bun than I've had for a long time."

"You were soused all right," agreed Whitey, with respect.

"You sounded like the P.A. system broadcasting," said Fraoli.

"Only not so pretty," said one of the card players, a dark, sullen looking man whose name was Adams.

"Say," said Whitey, peering at the half-finished sketch, "that's the Chief all right."

"The face is too long," drawled Adams in a bored voice.

"Listen at him," demanded the Chief. "He wouldn't compliment his own mother for givin' birth to him."

"Sick call!" announced the nurse from the ward entrance.

The boys in the sunroom at the end of the ward switched off the television picture they were watching. A Wave corpsman, who had been giving a patient an alcohol rub, stopped working and pulled

the sheet up over the patient's back. A noisy game of cards broke off in the middle. Every man who could get out of bed stood at attention at the foot of his bed, facing the open ward. Radios were silenced. Conversation ceased. The ward was quiet.

The doctor appeared in the doorway. He wore whites with two full gold stripes on his shoulder boards. The nurse, holding a notebook and pencil, walked beside him. They paused by the Chief's bed.

"Feeling all right, Chief?" inquired the doctor.

"Yes, sir," said the Chief, "feeling fine, sir."

"Good likeness," said the doctor, looking at the drawing. He gave me a friendly smile and passed on.

"Feeling all right, Swanson?" he asked Whitey.

"Fine, sir," said Whitey.

"You all right, Fraoli?"

"All right, sir."

"All right, Adams?"

"Yes, sir."

The doctor and the nurse passed on down the line of beds.

"Bastard!" said Adams in a level voice.

The Chief turned angry eyes on Adams.

"A lot you know about it, Adams," he said. "The Doc's a right guy."

"I know everything I want to know about officers," said Adams. "From a one-striper to an Admiral, they're all alike—bastards!"

"You don't know our MC's," said the Chief earnestly. "I've been here six months. You've only been here a couple of days. You don't know these guys—especially Dr. Joe," he finished fondly.

"Save your preaching for Sunday," said Adams in a low voice. "I know these guys all right. I ought to. I've been in five other hospitals over a period of fifteen months. 'Sick Call,' " he mimicked the doctor, " 'How're you feeling, Brown? Fine sir' like hell he is! 'You all right, Smith? Yes, sir.'—I'll say he is, just a little matter of an amputated leg, why wouldn't he be all right? 'You feeling better, Jones? Much better, sir.' Sure, he'll soon be well enough to go out of here feet first. Hell! I know these goddamned bastards!"

He straightened to attention as the doctor and nurse paused by the bed across the way.

"Are you feeling all right, Williams?" the doctor asked the Negro boy lying full length in bed.

"Pretty good, sir," the boy's voice was weak. "If I could only sleep."

"Give him a sedative," the doctor directed the nurse.

She wrote something down in her notebook. They passed on through the entrance and out of sight. Everybody relaxed. The boys in the sunroom turned on the television set. The Wave corpsman began to rub her patient's back. The card game was resumed. Radios were turned on. Conversation began. A corpsman rattled by, his galley wagon loaded with milk and fruit juice. The ward came to life.

Adams walked away toward the Head. Whitey turned to the Chief.

"What's the matter with him?" he asked.

"He's all shot because he wasn't well enough to get home for Christmas," said the Chief. "I wouldn't be surprised if he went AWOL."

Whitey made no comment.

"It's finished, Chief," I said, holding out the sketch.

He took it reverently.

"Say," he said admiringly, "that's a good job."

That's better than any photograph I ever had taken. The old lady'll sure get a kick outta that."

"Are you going to send it to your wife?" I asked. He nodded.

"As long as you fixed up my lip Okay," he said. "I didn't tell her about it. No use worryin' her."

He held it up for Whitey to look at.

"Sure flatters you, Chief," said Whitey. "Why, you look almost human!"

"Wait'll he gets out there on his farm," scoffed Fraoli, "the birds won't be able to tell him from the scarecrows."

"Have you got a farm, Chief?" I asked.

"Not yet," he admitted. "But I'm going to have one. I was brought up on a farm in Kansas, and me and the old lady've planned for years we was goin' to have a farm when I retired. Well, it looks like from what the Doc says that I'm goin' to be discharged. So I'm goin' to buy a little farm in Kansas and settle down. It's up to the young squirts now to win the war."

"How long have you been in the Navy, Chief?" I asked.

"Thirty years," said the Chief. "I'll be glad to do some farming for a change."

His voice was cheerful. Too cheerful. He didn't look like a farmer. He looked like what he was—an old salt.

"When are they going to discharge you?" I asked.

"Not for a while yet. I'm goin' to have an operation next week."

"Anything serious, Chief?"

"Nothing serious," said the Chief. He indicated his inflamed jaw. "The infection's got into my chin," he explained. "They gotta take it off."

There was a short silence. Then Whitey leaned over and slapped the Chief violently on the back so that he dropped the cigarette he was lighting and stooped to pick it up, cursing.

"What the hell, Chief," said Whitey. "You can grow chin whiskers. Farmers always do."

* * *

On Christmas Eve we went to Halloran hospital, the big Army Hospital on Staten Island. Ed Sullivan, the columnist for the *Daily News*, was giving a party for the patients and he wanted a group of artists to entertain the bedridden men who couldn't attend the party.

We were driven to the hospital in Red Cross am-

bulances, packed in with the entertainers. There was an entire swing band, the Ritz brothers, some singers, one or two Negro tap dancers, and according to reports, Marlene Dietrich, although we never saw her.

It was a long, cold trip by car and ferry and it was dark when we arrived. I couldn't tell much about the hospital, except that it was big and was built of red brick.

At Red Cross headquarters, we were served sandwiches and coffee before being ushered into another building. Here we were separated and sent in pairs into different wards. Willard Fairchild and I went together into a ward.

There were not many patients. Like all of the hospitals, everyone who was able to do so had gone home.

The Red Cross recreation worker told us that most of the cases here were burn cases. While she stood explaining to the nurse on duty what we had come for, Willard and I began to look for "customers." He took one side of the ward, and I took the other. In the first bed on my side lay a boy having a blood transfusion. His eyes were closed and he was muttering half deliriously. In the next

bed was a boy with a thatch of bright red hair and a swarm of freckles on his turned-up nose. His surprised blue eyes met mine.

"Would you like to have your picture drawn?" I asked.

He kept on staring at me. Finally he said warily: "How much is it?"

"It isn't anything. It's a present."

He still stared.

"Who pays you to do it?" he asked.

"Nobody," I said. "The picture is for you to send home to your girl. Have you got a girl?"

"Sure," he said, relaxing his wariness a little.

I began to sort out my pencils.

"Where is she?" I asked.

"Back home," he paused, then added briefly, "Detroit."

I opened my sketch pad.

"Can you sit up?" I asked.

He shook his head.

"All right," I said, "can you hold that pose?"

"Sure."

I began to draw, and he lay watching me out of bright, curious eyes. After a while he burst out: "This is a funny way to spend your Christmas Eve."

"This is a funny way to spend yours, isn't it?"

He laughed, and his eyes were more friendly.

"Yeah," he said. "I guess it is, at that."

"Have you been here long?"

"Three months. The tank I was in caught on fire and my legs got burned. I was in Italy at the time wiping up the Wops."

"Don't say Wops," said a new voice.

It belonged to a dark-haired, heavy-jawed young man with one hand swathed in bandages. He was wearing the dark red regulation bathrobe worn in all Army hospitals.

"This is Luigi," said the red-haired boy with a sweep of his hand, "better known as Lou. Lou, as you may have guessed, was born a Wop. Added to that he's a cop. That makes him a Wop cop . . ."

"Stop," said Lou. He looked pained. "What he's trying to tell you is that I'm in the Military Police."

"Imagine!" groaned the red-haired boy. "Of all the guys in this hospital, I'd have to draw an M.P. It's like living next door to an umpire."

Lou grinned.

"Red's experiences with umpires and M.P.'s have been unfortunate," he explained to me. "No wonder he feels the way he does."

He leaned over my shoulder and looked at the drawing.

"Don't forget to put those jug-ears in," he said. "And if you have room on the paper, stick in that Adam's apple."

The boy in the next bed who was having the transfusion began to moan softly.

"Hey, nurse," called Red, "Miller's hurting."

The nurses came over and bent over Miller. I heard her talking to him in a low voice. She held his hand a minute and then walked away. I finished Red's drawing and handed it to him. He studied it incredulously.

"Jesus!" he exclaimed. "Do I look that good?"

"Yes," said I.

"No," said the M.P.

"Say," he went on, "would you draw my picture, too?"

"I'd love to. I've never drawn an M.P. before."

He pulled up a chair and sat down, and I began to draw.

"Gosh," said Red delightedly. "I'm sure going to send this to my girl. I wish I could've gotten it to her for Christmas, though."

"Make it a New Year's present," the M.P. suggested.

He turned to me. "I'm going to take mine home as a Christmas present to my wife," he said.

"Do you live near here?" I asked.

"I live in the Bronx."

"He's got triplets," said Red. "Show her the picture of your kids, Lou."

Lou reached into the drawer of his locker with his good hand and produced a picture of three smiling little girls with dark curly hair.

"Their names," he said proudly, "are Alice, Bepina and Catherine—A, B and C," he explained. "They'll be three next month. I'm kinda glad about my hand getting burned. If it hadn't, I wouldn't have been able to spend Christmas with them."

"Last Christmas," said Red wistfully, "I spent with my girl and her family. They had a big turkey and all the fixings."

"You'll get turkey and all the fixings here tomorrow, kid," said Lou.

"Yeah," said Red without enthusiasm. "A G.I. Christmas."

Lou shrugged.

"You might be havin' it in a foxhole," he said virtuously.

Red thought that over.

"I wish I was," he said slowly. "I wish I was with my outfit." He scowled at Lou, "I'd be out there right now wiping up the Wops."

* * *

The Monday night after Christmas we went as usual to St. Albans. There were so many more of us now that the hospital sent a Red Cross ambulance for us instead of a station wagon. We had two wonderful drivers from the Queens Chapter, Mrs. Walter Lynch and Mrs. Sidney Cook. This faithful pair managed the heavy ambulances with the ease of truck drivers and showed up at the Vanderbilt every Monday night without fail. These big barn-like cars were freezing in winter and hot and stuffy in summer. When an ambulance stopped suddenly, whoever was sitting on the front end of the benches, which ran along the sides of the machine, slid violently off onto the floor. Riding on these hard, uncushioned benches, we had a deep-seated ache for the old days when we had driven in cushioned station wagons.

Signs of Christmas were still in evidence at St. Albans. A huge Christmas tree decorated the recreation hall; late-arriving gifts stood piled up in the Red Cross office, waiting to be delivered to patients by Red Cross workers; and so many patients had gone on leave that the wards seemed almost deserted.

I worked in a room that night off one of the wards. There were three patients in this room and they had hung some mistletoe over the door and were exacting payment from every nurse or Wave corpsman who came in.

The three patients, who were all in casts, had been in the hospital a long time. There was a big tow-headed fellow from Wisconsin, known as Lefty, because he had been a southpaw pitcher in some minor league. There was Ricardo, a Spaniard from Mexico City, and there was Steiner, a Jewish boy from the Bronx.

They were a noisy trio, although they were in one of the "quiet rooms." The quiet rooms were used for the very sick and often dying patients. But the three had been in the room for many months and they would, Lefty told me, remain unless the room was needed.

I drew Steiner's picture last. Steiner had been a cook aboard an airplane carrier. The carrier had been hit, and Steiner had had his back broken. For months he had been incased in a plaster cast like a turtle inside his shell. Lefty called him "Brother Terrapin."

Steiner told me he had been at Brooklyn before he had been transferred to St. Albans and had known a lot of the men I knew.

"Say," he said suddenly. "Did you know a Marine named Erikson at Brooklyn?"

"I never met him," I said. "But I heard about him. He was a hero, wasn't he?"

"Yeah," said Steiner. "But he sure hated it."

I had heard a good deal about Erikson. The whole hospital had rung with his exploits. As usual, it was Olson who had told me about him. Erikson had landed on Guadalcanal with the fabulous First Division in August of 1942 and had gone through the battle of Tenaru River when 200 Marines were attacked by 1700 Japs. The odds expressed Erikson's way of thinking—ten Japs to one Marine.

"If you think large enough," Erikson said, "you always get results."

Everything about Erikson was on a large scale,

from his thinking to his feet. He looked like a big, blond Viking. Although he was a sergeant, he preferred to think of himself as a corporal. He claimed that a lot of Marine sergeants were old-time professional Leathernecks and he had a kind of pride about belonging to the new crop of Marines.

With the rest of the Marines—those that weren't killed—Erikson lived a strange primitive sort of existence. In the surf around the island there were barracuda, sharks, sea snakes, razor-edge coral, polluted waters, poisoned fish and giant clams which had a way of clamping onto a guy's leg like a bear trap. Ashore there was leprosy, yaws, typhoid, dengue fever, dysentery, skin and eye infections, and a variety of insects, giant lizards and snakes. Whenever inactivity palled, Erikson went off into the jungle sniping for Japs. He slept in trees or in foxholes and lived on K rations. He never saw any women and he reported to Olson that it was nice to get back to the States and find that the opposite sex still existed and that the Red Cross and the USO were going all out for the servicemen.

He told Olson that he could never feel the closeness for his own mother or the son he might some

day have, that he had felt for the men he'd known on Guadalcanal.

"It does something to you," he said to Olson, "being out there. Everything is so remote. Nobody else in the world is so real as those guys. You talk about things together you've never even admitted to yourself. And then after a while you know each other so well you don't need to say anything. There was one little guy there named Marty—he was just eighteen—he used to lie down and put his head in my lap and tell me about his girl. Her name was Ellen and she came from West Virginia. Jesus! I'd know that girl if I met her in Times Square on a Saturday night. A Jap sniper got the kid. I found his body—what was left of it. I spent a lot of days looking for that Nip." He gave a short laugh. "I guess I'll never know whether I got him."

Erikson had been at Brooklyn for nine months. His left arm was paralyzed, he had shrapnel wounds all over him, and he had twenty attacks of malaria. He had, also, a Purple Heart and a Silver Star. These, he claimed, gave him more trouble than the malaria.

"I wonder," said Steiner, "if Erik went home to Michigan for Christmas?"

"I don't know," I answered. "I suppose if he's well enough he got a leave."

"Somehow," said Steiner, "I doubt if Erikson went home."

"Why?"

"Well, you know, he hated the decorations he had. He was a hero, you see. Everybody was excited about him. He was always being asked to make speeches for war bond rallies. That bothered him. He said why the hell should he use the experiences he and the other guys had had to get civilians to buy more bonds to make more money for themselves? He got so he dreaded to go into a restaurant or a bar when he was on leave. Somebody always tried to buy him a drink and have him tell about his experiences. Even on subways or streetcars he wasn't safe. There was always some civilian who noticed his decorations and thought it would be exciting to talk to a hero. They didn't seem to realize, he said, that nobody in this man's war was a hero. It was just that the guys that lived got the ribbons. Every time somebody asked him what it was like on Guadalcanal he started thinking about the guys in his outfit that were still out

there somewhere going through hell and he didn't want to talk about it."

"Is that why you think he wouldn't go home for Christmas?"

"Yeah, more or less," said Steiner. "He told me when he went home on leave it was the same thing. He couldn't seem to talk to his family. They looked at things so different from him. At the dinner table his kid sister asked him how he could sleep at night with all those Japs on his conscience, and the whole thing rose up before his eyes—all those dead bodies. He said his stomach turned over and he got up and left the table. The next leave he got he spent in New York with one of the guys from the hospital."

"Did he have a girl?" I asked.

"He'd had a wife," said Steiner, "but something had happened. I think they broke it up. I don't know much about it. Erik never said much. The only thing he seems to want to do is to get well enough to go back into action. I don't know," he said, "but I don't think Erik went home for Christmas."

"This will be finished," I said, "in a minute. Are you tired of sitting?"

"No," said Steiner. "How about putting a hat on me?"

"A hat!" snorted Lefty. "With that coffin you're wearin'! Jesus!"

"Knock it off," said Steiner mildly. "There's a lady present."

"You know what happens to them guys in body casts?" Lefty asked me while I was drawing the hat on Steiner.

"What?"

"They're limited to three glasses of beer, so they won't swell up and crack the cast," said Lefty delightedly.

"Besides," said Ricardo, "they stink."

"Here's your picture," I said to Steiner.

Steiner took it and held it up for the others to see.

"Jeez!" breathed Lefty. "Did you flatter that guy!"

"Are you going to send it to your wife?" I asked. Steiner shook his head.

"I haven't got a wife," he said disgustedly. "I'd only been married a month when I got my orders and when I got back she said she'd fallen in love with another guy. So—we got a divorce."

"Well, what'd you expect?" demanded Lefty. He turned to me. "Steiner only knew the girl two weeks," he said, "and she was just eighteen. I told him the next time he got married, to marry a woman."

"Who are you going to send it to?" I asked.

"Believe it or not," said Steiner, "I'm gonna send it to my mother-in-law. She's a grand old girl."

"Now, I've heard everything," said Lefty.

I gathered up my drawing materials and stood up.

"Good night," I said, "I'll see you next week, maybe."

"Oh, we'll be here all right," said Ricardo.

"Thanks a lot," said Steiner, "and Merry Christmas!"

"You dumb cluck!" said Lefty. "Christmas was last week, remember? It's Happy New Year, now."

CHAPTER VI

THERE'S ALWAYS A CATCH IN IT

“THE NURSES ARE THE BEST part of the hospital,” a Marine at St. Albans told me. “I was at New Guinea and when they evacuated us by plane, the only good thing I saw about getting a pound of lead in my stomach was that flight nurse. Boy, was she a honey!”

“Was she pretty?” I asked.

“Jeez!” he wrinkled his brow in surprise. “Darned if I even remember what she looked like. It was just her voice and everything about her. I was hurting like hell when a couple of litter bearers carried me up to the plane—and then I saw her. She came up to me, smiled and said, ‘Hello, Corporal, how are you?’ Then she looked at my tag and said to the corpsman, ‘Abdominal, put him in the middle tier.’ She waved at me and said, ‘I’ll see you later,

Corporal.' She came aboard after the plane was loaded and gave me some morphine, and I stopped hurting all of a sudden and it wasn't all due to the morphine, either."

"Was it a Red Cross plane?"

"No, it was a big Army transport. We didn't have no Red Cross markings, just an escort of fighters. But, boy! Was that nurse swell!"

"How about the nurses in here?"

"They're swell, too. See that honey over there with the blond hair? Her name's Madeleine. Hey, Madeleine, come on over here and have your picture drawn, on account of you're prettier than I am."

Many of the nurses in the wards where I worked had had months of overseas duty. One of the Catholic chaplains told me that the nurses were more eager to get back to the fighting than the men.

"You would think," he said, "after what some of the nurses who were in the Pacific went through—dirt, privation, disease, fatigue—they'd never want to go back. But they do. As long as there are men over there needing care, they want to go back."

I had heard about the experiences of some of those nurses. But the percentage of nurses who

cracked up was small, probably because the profession of nursing was basically unselfish. Most of them were similar to the steady-eyed nurse I met at the Brooklyn Naval Hospital who had been in the Pacific area for a year.

"Yes, it was hell, of course," she told me. "The filth was the worst. But I want to go back. I'm needed there."

The patients I talked with in the hospitals reserved a very special feeling for their nurses. Occasionally they would point one out to me—usually a woman of uncertain age whom they called the old maid type. She was regarded as too pompously "G.I." Most of the nurses, however, were young and sympathetic, but not sentimental or over-emotional. And they were able to take endless kidding from the men and give it back with interest.

The patients always made love to the nurses. But their love-making was confined to the wards, unlike the budding affairs they had with the Waves or Wacs attached to the hospital staff as corpsmen or technicians. These affairs blossomed into dates and often marriage, but the nurses' rank made dates with enlisted men impossible and they had to leave the service if they married. Nurses *did* marry pa-

tients, of course. I knew one at St. Albans who married one of the patients from her ward. It was a ward I usually worked in and I knew Buck—that was the patient's name—very well.

Buck told me he fell in love with Nina the first time he saw her.

"I took one look at her," he said, "and I said she's for me—and from then on," he added modestly, "she was."

"From then on, my foot!" said Ellis—Ellis had the next bed. He turned to me: "That guy had a battle every inch of the way. Nina is no pushover, you know. Naturally she wasn't going to fall for the kind of corn this guy was shucking."

"Naturally," I agreed.

Buck looked injured. But not very. It was hard to keep the smile from breaking through.

"She was the first good thing I saw after I came back," he said with a grin. "Boy, oh boy, did she look good!"

Nina had red hair and a little tip-tilted nose becomingly freckled. Her energy was boundless. She never wasted motions. Everything she did had drive and purpose. Her voice, her eyes, her red hair were electric with vitality. This zest for life made

her the most creative nurse in the ward. It was a challenge she flung at her patients, "Look at me and live."

She was on duty the day Buck was brought in. She made the rounds with the doctor and when she stopped beside his bed and stood gravely writing something in her notebook ("about me," he told me), it was, as Buck said, "all over but the shouting."

It was all over for Nina, too, as Ellis told me later, but she wouldn't admit it at first.

"Why should she fall for Buck?" Ellis marveled. "Out of all the guys that were crazy about her. Why Buck?"

There was no answer to that.

"He called her Red," Ellis went on. "She hated that name. He called her Red, or Angel of Mercy, or Miss Nightingale."

"It was a very romantic courtship," chimed in Buck. "Every time I'd get passionate she'd bring me the bedpan—which was damned dampening."

"Nothing dampened you," snorted Ellis. "Whenever she took your temperature, you tried to hold her hand."

"That's what kept my temperature up all those months," sighed Buck. He turned to me, "Do you

know," he said, "she rubbed my back the first day she met me. She had me groggy with the fumes of rubbing alcohol. That's how she trapped me."

Buck had been on a destroyer. The ship had been on convoy duty to England and halfway over she had been attacked by a German sub. She hadn't been sunk but she had been hit, and the shock had thrown Buck down a ladder onto his head. When he regained consciousness, he was dazed and he thought that was all that was wrong. But after a while he began to have fainting spells. With the spells came periodic fits of blindness. Buck called them blackouts. He was sent to a receiving hospital in England and then to a receiving hospital in the United States, and finally to St. Albans.

I had drawn a number of the boys in his ward before I drew Buck. Buck was hard to convince. He was another cynic. When I first asked if I might draw his picture, he said: "How much is it?"

"Nothing."

"Who pays you to do it?"

"Nobody."

"What's the catch?"

"There isn't any."

He looked at me suspiciously out of a pair of

ironic black eyes, eyes that didn't quite match in size.

"Yeah?" said Buck. "There's always a catch."

So I went to the next bed and drew Ellis. Ellis was Buck's pal. He was little and tubby, with red hair, a round merry face that was always breaking into smiles and a genius for going to sleep anywhere at any time.

"Don't pay any attention to Buck," said Ellis. "He's got a suspicious nature. He thinks everybody is mazuma-minded the way he is."

"And who," demanded Buck, "won five dollars off of me last night in a gyp game?"

"Oh, that," murmured Ellis deprecatingly. "That was just a simple little card trick, my dear boy, and cheap at the price, since it'll teach you not to be taken in by cardsharps. This ward is full of them, alas!" He allowed his disapproving gaze to wander over the various beds.

"Hold your head still," I said.

"I can't," said Ellis, "or I'll go to sleep."

This proved to be true, and I finished his drawing under difficulties. Buck observed it impartially.

"So that's it," he remarked coolly.

"What is?"

"The catch."

"What catch?" I demanded with exasperation.

"You flatter the boys," he said. "You build up their egos. You," he said accusingly, "are a Do-Gooder!"

I went home chastened.

But the next week I was back in the same ward drawing another boy. Buck was up and walking around. He ambled over and stood heckling me all the time I was making the drawing. He was in very good form until Nina came over to watch. Then he went as flat as a glass of stale beer. He walked back to his bed and lay down, smoking in sulky silence. And all the time that Nina was talking and laughing with me, I noticed that she was watching Buck out of the corner of her eye.

When I finally drew Buck's picture, it was a minor triumph.

"But don't let it set you up," Buck warned me. "I'm not impressed, you understand—except by your persistence. I never saw anyone so damned persistent."

"How old are you, Buck?" I asked.

"How old do you think?" Buck countered.

"Twenty-seven?" I guessed.

"I'm twenty," said Buck.

I studied his face. It was thin, and there were

lines around his mouth and dark hollows under his eyes.

"You look much older," I said.

"Think of everything I've been through," drawled Buck. His mouth was twisted into a mocking smile.

The smile was still on his lips when he looked at the finished drawing.

"So that's the way I look," he said with his head cocked on one side. "It's funny," he said thoughtfully, "I don't really know what my face looks like. I never looked at it before."

There was a howl of laughter from Ellis.

Buck gave the picture to Nina. A long time afterward, Ellis told me, she had it framed, and it hung over her desk.

It was sometime after that, that Buck began to have recurrences of fainting spells and blindness. I was in the ward one night when he was coming in from Ship's Service where he had gone to buy some ice cream. He paused uncertainly in the doorway, then pitched down on his face, the paper carton of ice cream skittering across the floor. It was Nina who got to him first. She and the corpsman got him onto his bed. When he opened his eyes, he was blind.

I asked the doctor about him the following week. The doctor was dubious.

"We don't know yet exactly what is wrong with him," he said.

"But will he regain his sight?"

"Probably."

Blind, Buck was as cocky as ever.

"Just think," he said to me one night when I stopped to say hello—Nina was rubbing his back—"I don't have to see Red to know how beautiful she is. All I have to do is sniff the perfume of her rubbing alcohol and all is revealed."

Buck and Nina were married in March. Ellis was best man. As Ellis was a little tight and Buck still couldn't see very well, it was a question, Nina told me, of whom held whom up.

Buck had fought the marriage because he thought he was too much of a liability and besides he was interfering with Nina's career—she had to leave the Navy. But Nina was firm. She took a job nursing in a civilian hospital. She rented an apartment in New York and whenever Buck was well enough to have liberty he spent it at home with Nina.

They had been married five months when Buck told me that he was going to have an operation.

"They're going to take the top of my head off,"

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They had been married five months when Buck told me that he was going to have an operation.

"They're going to take the top of my head off,"

he said, smiling. "Seems hardly necessary, does it?"

"When?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't know. I'm being fattened for the slaughter," he shrugged. "Any action seems better than none to me now," he said. "I'm sick of not knowing. This way—well, I may not come through it, but—" he shrugged again.

"I know," I said. "I agree with you. I'd rather take a chance—any chance. I've got my fingers crossed, Buck."

The doctor had told me there was an even chance.

"We're going to do everything we can to save him," he had said gravely.

Now Buck repeated almost his same words.

"The doc," he said, "will manage it if he can. He's a great guy for working miracles."

"You know," he said a little later, "whatever happens I wouldn't have missed all this. I wouldn't have missed being in the Navy. I wouldn't have missed this year in the hospital. I wouldn't have missed Nina. I've learned things here about life and about guys. If I come through this, I'll know how to live." He grinned at me with the ghost of his old cockiness on his lips. "I'll know how to live," he added, "if I don't die. I knew there'd be a catch in it."

CHAPTER VII

VALLEY FORGE

THE VALLEY FORGE GENERAL Hospital, two miles from Valley Forge and five miles from Phoenixville, is set in fertile Pennsylvania farming land. The big red brick buildings are of Colonial design. The little church boasts a tall white wooden steeple and the main building a white wooden cupola. The hospital is still comparatively new, but, unlike many Army and Navy hospitals hastily constructed of white frame, Valley Forge has a permanent look. It might be a sanitarium—or even a college.

It was the summer of 1944 when Kay Kenny and I went to Valley Forge. We lived in the Nurses' Quarters, a big beautifully kept building set a little apart from the hospital. We ate our meals with the

nurses and Wac officers attached to the hospital staff and sketched in the wards during the day. Long main corridors connected most of the buildings, and Kay and I were always lost in them, futilely searching for some particular ward.

Although it is a general hospital and handles every type of case, Valley Forge is famous as one of the five Army hospitals—Walter Reed, Letterman, Bushnell and O'Reilly—specializing in plastic surgery. New surgical techniques and improvements of old ones are being used by some of the finest plastic surgeons in the world attached to these hospitals. The famous plastic surgeon at Valley Forge is Lt. Col. Brown, and Kay and I saw many evidences of the miracles he had performed.

Col. Brown was away on leave when we were there, so that we were unable to meet him but we talked with one of his assistants, Sgt. Eliscu.

Technical Sergeant Frank Eliscu used to be a sculptor. He came from New York City. His job at the hospital was to make careful drawings of each plastic surgery patient from the time of his entrance into the hospital to the time when he was cured. He also made plaster masks of the patients, and while we looked through the sketches and

studied the masks, he told us stories about some of the cures performed.

There was one drawing of a patient who had no nose. His mouth was torn and drawn out of shape, and one eye was gone. Twelve operations had been performed on the man. His nose had been filled out with cartilage taken from his ribs, and skin had been grafted on to it. His mouth was reshaped, and new skin grafted to form the lips. His eyelid was reconstructed and the eye socket lined with skin so that an artificial eye could be inserted. He had been in the hospital for over a year and would probably be there several months longer, but, as was obvious from the latest sketch, his face and features had returned to their normal appearance.

"Cartilage," said Sgt. Eliscu, "is one of the most important things in plastic surgery. You've got to use the patient's own skin tissue for a skin grafting job, but you can permanently transplant one person's cartilage to another. Besides that, you can preserve cartilage in a germicide solution. You can use it to rebuild ears, or noses, or the bony margins around eyes, or to replace damaged skull."

"But you do a lot of skin grafting, too, don't you?" I asked.

"Good Lord, yes!" said the Sergeant. "Particularly in burn cases."

"Where would you take the skin from?"

"Usually from the arm, chest, thigh, or abdomen. You've probably seen the men in some of the wards who are growing a tubed pedicle of skin on an arm, haven't you?"

"No," Kay and I chorused.

"The skin is taken from the arm," said the Sergeant, making several strokes with a wolf pencil on a block of drawing paper, "like this, see?"

"Yes."

"The surgeon would raise a strip of skin and fat on the patient's arm and stitch its sides together to make a solid cylinder of tissue like this," he made a drawing that looked like the handle of a suitcase. "The pedicle would be lined with more skin which would be grafted from the abdomen or some other part of the body and after several weeks there would be a lot of healthy new skin. The pedicle could then be grafted to any part of the patient's body—and this is the way it's done." He began to illustrate again. "One end of the pedicle would be cut from the arm and sewed to the damaged part. And it would continue to receive nourishment from the

arm to which the other was still attached. After the part had healed, it would be cut from the arm and all the patient has to do is to wait for the scars to heal."

"And do they?" Kay asked.

"In most cases they do," said the Sergeant. "Every effort is made to restore a patient to his normal appearance, because there is a worse psychological reaction to facial disfigurement on the part of the patient than if he had lost an arm or a leg. I think it's safe to say that most of the cases who leave here are cured. If you talk with the men," he said, "you'll see that they have utter confidence in Col. Brown. He's not only a great surgeon. He's a great man."

"How do you like the work you are doing?" I asked.

The Sergeant turned his eager dark eyes on me.

"I like it," he said. "I like being a part of it. To rebuild men's faces is the greatest creative work I've ever done. Look there," he said, pointing.

Behind the glass doors of a cabinet filled with various art materials were several small bronzes. One was the figure of a fawn, another of a cock. They were delicately and beautifully made.

"That was the sort of thing I did in civilian life," said the Sergeant.

He pointed to a mask hanging over his desk. The face was grim. The nose was a gaping hole; one side of the jaw was crushed; the mouth was drawn into a sneer. The Sergeant had shown us the sketches of the rehabilitated face that went with the mask.

"That's the sort of thing I do now," he said. "I'd rather be doing it."

When we were not drawing in the wards, or asking Sgt. Eliscu questions, or talking to Corp. Charlie Woods, the editor of the hospital paper, Kay and I were eating ice-cream sodas in the patients' PX. The PX drew us like a magnet; first, because of the huge orders of ice cream they served and, second, because of the constant, happy bedlam of noise made by the ambulatory patients who crowded the place. Everybody who could do so went to the PX at least once every day. At the tables the patients discussed everything from war to women, and from the operation they had just had to the furlough they were going to have. I sat with four of them one day when the subject got onto women.

"Women," said Joe, "are all wolves. You can't depend on them any more."

"Listen at who's talkin'," remarked MacGruder, the big sergeant from California. "The wolf of 4B."

"Late of 4B," corrected Joe. "But now of the Rehabilitation Center."

"The things they rehabilitate nowadays," drawled MacGruder. "What else'll you have, Honey?" he asked, turning to me.

"Nothing more, thanks," I said, sipping my chocolate soda.

It was mid-afternoon, and the PX was crowded. The long food bar, which stretched the length of the room, was knee-deep with boys; boys in working khaki and dark red Army pajamas or bathrobes bearing the white letters USA, MD; boys wearing dark glasses or patches over their eyes; boys leaning on canes or crutches; boys without arms, without legs, without noses, without chins. Everybody was calling out his orders over the heads of somebody else.

"Gimme a hamonrye an' coffee."

"A chocolate milk shake with a double dip."

"The same all over again, Beautiful."

"Say, Blondie, remember me? I ordered a fudge

sundae with nuts a half hour ago—with *nuts*! Can you hurry that order? I gotta date with a doctor.”

“Two banana cones and one raspberry.”

“Say, listen, Miss—”

“Hey, Beautiful—”

And behind the counter the two girls went on calmly handing out sandwiches, ice cream and friendly wisecracks.

There were several long tables in the PX and some smaller tables, and these were all crowded with a mixture of patients, a handful of ward boys (nicknamed “bedpan commandos” by the patients), some Red Cross workers, a few officers and a sprinkling of Wacs attached to the staff. Over and above the hum of conversation and bursts of laughter was the persistent moan of the juke box. Kay and I usually breakfasted in the PX instead of getting up at dawn to eat in the Nurses’ Quarters.

MacGruder heaved his six-feet-two, two-hundred-and-ten pound bulk out of his chair.

“Any repeats?” he inquired.

Everybody said no, and MacGruder went over to the food bar and bawled out an order for another dish of banana ice cream.

"That guy could eat ice cream all day," said Baldini, a little Italian private with only one leg.

"He hasn't been back long enough to get used to it," said Joe.

"Where was he?" I asked.

"France," said Joe. "Where's your girl friend?"

"She's making a drawing in the PT department."

MacGruder came back with his ice cream and sat down.

"Now," he said between bites, "what was you talkin' about, Casanova? Women? What about 'em?"

Joe was thoughtful.

"Nothing about them. I just said they were no good."

"We have," MacGruder pointed out, "a lady present."

Joe grinned at me.

"Take it easy, pal," he said to MacGruder. "The exceptions prove the rule."

"What's wrong with women?" I asked.

"You can't trust them," said Joe promptly.

"Don't listen to that guy, Honey," urged MacGruder. "He's nothin' but a wolf."

I looked at Joe. He didn't look like a wolf. He

was not very tall and he was built like a piece of spaghetti. A long red scar ran down the side of his face from his forehead to his chin. On his left temple another scar emerged from his eyebrow and crawled halfway up to his hairline. Both scars lifted his eyebrows and lent him a permanently quizzical expression. His whole face was a little lopsided, like a drawing made by a child. These were Joe's visible scars. Added to them he wore a metal kneecap and a metal plate inside his head.

The day before, when I had drawn his picture, he had said to me royally, "Make me look the way I'm going to look when the Doc gets through with me."

He seemed to be in no doubt that he was going to look all right. So I had studied the line of his features and drawn him with an eye to the future.

"Where are you from?" I asked.

"Virginia," his lopsided mouth twisted into a grin. "But not," he said, "one of the F.F.V.'s. I belong to the new order." He indicated the white letters on his dark red hospital pajamas. "The USA, MD's. Know what they stand for?"

"Not as regards the inner circles," I admitted.

"Many Die," he quoted. "U Shall Also."

"That's not very encouraging."

"It's only a joke," he explained solemnly. "Nobody thinks they're going to die when they get in the Doc's hands. Have you met him—Colonel Brown, I mean?"

"No."

"He's terrific," Joe said. "There's nobody like him. He's the best plastic surgeon in the world," he said with conviction, "and besides that, he's such a damn human guy."

"I've heard about some of his miracles."

"After a while," said Joe, "you get used to seeing miracles performed every day. Look at Ernie over there. Ernie!" he called across the ward.

Ernie came over.

"Ernie," said Joe, "don't you think what the Doc did for your face was a miracle?"

Ernie was eating a large piece of chocolate cake and finished the bite he was chewing, then he jerked a thumb in the direction of the drawing.

"I think what she's doin' for your face is a bigger miracle," he drawled.

Joe was patient.

"Ernie didn't have any nose when he came," he

explained. "Nor any left eye either. He was a sight, weren't you, Ernie?"

This time Ernie agreed.

"When they seen me at Stark," he said, "the only way they could tell my face from a piece of beefsteak was because it didn't have no points on it."

Joe looked pained.

"Ernie," he explained, "is given to jokes."

"I come in at Stark," Ernie went on, taking another bite—"that's a receiving hospital in Charleston—on Mothers' Day. We was all back from Italy and all night long guys was phonin' to their mothers. Everybody that could waited in line in the signal office. An' nurses was pluggin' in phones by the beds of guys that couldn't get up. I didn't get a'holt of my mother till the next mornin'. She don't have no phone, so I hadda call our nextdoor neighbor's. Jesus! Was she surprised!"

"Didn't she know you were in this country?" I asked.

"Gawd, no! She thought I was still in the Eytalian campaign. She cried a lot over the phone. She didn't rightly care about my eye or my face. All she cared about was she'd got me home and she

figgered she'd got me for the doo-ration. Women are funny that way," said Ernie.

"Where are you from?" I asked.

"Arkansas."

"Ernie's a hillbilly," said Joe. "Couldn't you tell?"

I looked at Ernie. He was very tall and rangy. His big bony hands hung down from the too-short sleeves of his red bathrobe. His brown hair stood up in a rebellious cowlick. One blue eye moved restlessly in his red face; the other one, of blue china, stared incuriously straight ahead. There was a white bandage over his new nose. Ernie put the last bite of chocolate cake in his mouth and chewed it appreciatively.

"My mother made that cake," he said. "Would you like a piece, ma'am?"

"I'd love one later," I said.

"Yeah," Ernie went on, "the Doc's done a job on me. But Christalmighty! 'T'ain't nothin' to some of the other jobs he done in here. That's one thing about these here wards," said Ernie, "you can't nowise get to feelin' sorry for yourself, because the guy in the next bed is always worse off." He shook his head. "I seen some sights in this hospital.

Brother!" He broke off and turned to Joe. "You remember that lieutenant I was tellin' you about?"

Joe nodded and Ernie turned to me.

"Was that guy a mess once!" he said. "His face was cut up. He was blind in both eyes and both hands had been cut off. Jesus! If I'da been that guy, I wouldn't have wanted to live."

"Did he want to live?" I asked.

"Sure he did," said Ernie. "Life gets to lookin' pretty sweet. I remember how I felt when I hit Stark. Gawdalmighty! Was I glad to see the little old USA! Well, anyway, that guy I was tellin' you about, that lieutenant—the Doc fixed up his face. He can see a little, too—that is, he can tell light from dark. And they give him a pair of artificial hands. Anyway, that guy is playin' golf reg'lar with some of the officers and he's tryin' to get back to limited duty. Hell," said Ernie, "if a lieutenant can do that, I ain't got no call to gripe! I'm a sergeant," he explained to me.

"But that's incredible!" I exclaimed. "How can he play golf?"

"Anything can happen here," said Joe. "I've never seen him, but I've heard that same story from

some of the nurses. His eyes could tell the difference between light and dark, you see."

"But what about his hands? How could he grip a golf club?"

"Haven't you seen any artificial hands?"

"No."

"Well, if the tendons in the wrist are Okay, ivory pegs are fitted into the tendons and he learns to move the pegs by flexing his tendons. Catch?"

I nodded.

"Well, then when he's ready, he's fitted with an artificial hand which has an ivory peg inside that connects with the other ivory pegs in his tendons. When he flexes the pegs, the artificial hand closes and he can get a good grip on something. There's another kind, too, that they use when the tendons have been injured. The hand is made all in one piece, but you couldn't grip a golf club very well, so I figure the lieutenant must have the other kind. It's just another one of the miracles we were talking about."

"Speakin' of miracles," said Ernie, turning to Joe, "d'ja hear about Morgan?"

"What about him?"

"Morgan's got a cheek abrasion," Ernie said to

me, "and the Doc's fixed him up like new. They're callin' it the Miracle of Morgan's Cheek."

Ernie winked his one good eye at me and strolled off highly pleased with himself. Joe groaned.

"Ernie and his puns," he said.

"How long have you been here?" I asked.

"Thirteen months. I came here from Letterman Hospital. You should have seen me when I was there," said Joe. "This eye," he indicated his left eye, "was in a state. I still can't see very well out of it." He traced the scars on his face. "These looked terrible," he said. "They hadn't been fixed up. My head was all bandaged and my leg was in a plaster cast. You could hardly see anything but bandages. I looked like hell and I felt like hell." He grinned reminiscently. "There was one of these visiting celebrities that came into the ward to see 'the boys.' Well, she saw them and a lot of them looked as bad as I did. When she got around to my bed—the CO was escorting her around—she said to me, 'And how do you feel, my boy?' It's a wonder," said Joe, "I didn't give it to her straight. But she repeated her question—maybe she thought I couldn't hear in all those bandages—and I barked out at the top of my voice, 'SICK!' That shut her up," he

said pleasantly. "She got out of that ward without asking any more questions. Oh, boy, was I burned up!"

"How much longer do you expect to be here?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't know. Ten months—maybe a year. I'm going to go back to duty if I can. I got knocked out in Africa and I've missed a lot. I want to get back in."

"Maybe it will be over by then," I suggested hopefully.

"Maybe. But I doubt it. Anyway, they'll need the infantry for a long time. There'll be plenty for me to do."

"Don't you want to go back home and settle down?"

"Sure, sure. Every guy dreams of that. I want to come back and get a job and get married and have kids. I want all of that but," he shrugged, "this war kind of gets you after a while. I reckon I couldn't go back home and settle down to peace until guys everywhere in the world were doing the same thing. After everything's taken care of I'll get married and grow a paunch, but not yet. That's

my girl." He pointed at the framed photograph on the locker beside his bed.

I picked it up and studied it, a pretty, gentle looking girl with dark hair and big dark eyes. On the locker beside every bed in every ward I had ever been in, I had seen the counterpart of that face. Some of them had been younger, some older. Some had had red hair, some blond, some black, some even, grey. The faces had been black, white, Italian, French, Swedish, Jewish, but they all shared something in common. Proudly they had looked out at me from their frames and proudly they had been introduced, "My Mother—my Wife—my Girl—"

* * *

Now, remembering the picture, I shook my head at MacGruder.

"He doesn't look like a wolf," I said.

MacGruder waved his hand.

"That's where he's got it all over us obvious guys," he said. "Take me, for instance . . ."

There was a groan from everybody.

"Leave it lay, MacGruder," said Hank, the tow-headed Pole from Minnesota who wore his arm in

a plaster cast. "I want to hear what Joe has to say about women."

"Nothing much," said Joe modestly. "I just think you can't depend on them any more."

"Why not?" I asked.

"Oh, I don't know. Some of them make better money than the guys they're engaged to, so they figure there's no use getting married. Some of them don't want to wait for their guys, so they get married to somebody else. Some of them are like Rusty's girl."

"Yeah," said MacGruder, "that's the truth."

"Sure," said Baldini, "I know Rusty. That was a tough break. It just about finished the guy."

"Who is Rusty?" I asked.

"Rusty's in the ward I used to be in," said Joe. "He's a paratrooper and he got shot down. He came back without any nose and one ear gone and a busted jaw. He wasn't a pretty sight, but when they get through fixing him up he'll be all right—not that he cares much now. His wife came to see him. He'd been living for that. Well, she couldn't take it. Rusty's giving her a divorce so she can marry somebody else. It's the sort of thing that's happened to several of the guys I've known."

"Yeah," said MacGruder. "You remember Koslowski, Joe?"

"Sure."

"Well, the same thing happened to him. He come home to find his wife—he hadn't seen her for two years—was gonna have a baby."

"An' Dubinsky," said Baldini. "You remember him—when he came back he found his girl married some guy who was workin' in the same defense plant where she was."

Joe said, "It's the sort of thing could happen to any of us."

"Not me," said Hank quietly. "My wife's different."

"Ferchrissake!" exploded MacGruder. "What makes you think *your* wife's the only different one? My old lady sold out everything in Vallejo and moved down here just to be near me. She waits on table at the hotel in town and comes out to see me three times a week."

"My girl waited for me," said Baldini. "We're gonna get married as soon as I get a leave."

"Do you really feel that way about women, Joe?" I asked.

Joe ran his fingers through the short crop of his

G.I. haircut and grinned at me out of the side of his twisted mouth.

"It isn't the way I feel about 'em," he said, "it's the way they feel. I know several guys that came home after two years to find their wives pregnant. I know several guys that were engaged and came home to find their girls married to someone else. I suppose you can't blame the women. They get tired of waiting and they get to wondering if their men are faithful, like a Wac sergeant I knew. She's married to a guy in the Air Corps. He's been overseas for two years. She says she stayed faithful for three months, then she got lonesome and figured he probably wasn't faithful anyway, so why should she be. So—," he shrugged, "that's how it goes."

"But not with you, Joe," I said.

Joe didn't say anything. He whistled the tune the juke box was playing. Presently he broke into the words of the song, "Long ago and far away I dreamed a dream one day . . ."

"Well," demanded MacGruder, "can't you answer the lady, Joe? Did your girl let you down, too?"

Joe sat up very straight. His brown eyes under the quizzical eyebrows flashed at MacGruder.

"Goddamit!" he exclaimed in a furious voice. "My girl isn't like that. She's, she's . . ."

"Take it easy, Joe," interrupted MacGruder, laughing. "Don't tell us. We know. Your girl is different." He got up from the table. "Any repeat orders?" he asked.

Joe, still red in the face, said: "For God's sake, MacGruder, not again!"

MacGruder didn't bother to reply. He walked defiantly over to the food bar and demanded another order of banana ice cream, then came back with a heaped-up dish.

"Say, Joe," asked Baldini, "if we get the soldier vote, who're you gonna vote for?"

"If we get it! We've got it, you damn fool!"

"Jeez," said Baldini. "Nobody told me. Well, how're you gonna vote, Joe?"

Joe lit a cigarette and looked wise.

"I haven't decided yet," he said.

There was a shout of laughter from MacGruder.

"You got plenty of time, Joey, boy," he said, "considerin' that you won't be twenty-one for another year."

Joe wasn't embarrassed. He looked at MacGruder with an impish, one-sided smile.

"Tell us, MacGruder," he said, "how the Great Man is going to vote."

"Who, me?" asked MacGruder.

"Who else?"

"Well," said MacGruder thoughtfully, "I think Dewey's Okay for a gang-buster, or even a governor, but when it comes to the CO's job, I'm gonna vote for the Old Man."

"Yeah," said Baldini, "I'm gonna vote for the Old Man, too."

"Not me," said Hank. "I'm votin' for Dewey. I'm sick of this war and I guess we'll get rid of that after we get Dewey."

"Well, of all the damfool ideas. . . ." began MacGruder.

Hank stood up.

"I gotta get back," he said. "I wanta write a letter before mess."

"Yeah, me too," said Baldini.

We all got up and started to move through the crowded room to the door.

"Hank," said MacGruder, "I'm gonna educate you. Listen, you dumb Polack . . ."

"Take it easy, pal," said Joe. "No use getting

excited. You can kill Hank's vote, so what do you care."

* * *

The wards at Valley Forge were like most of the hospital wards I had visited, with one exception. On the foot of every bed was a gayly colored patchwork afghan made by the Red Cross. The Red Cross Grey Ladies were all local women who worked as volunteers from two to five days a week. In the blind wards Kay and I saw several of them sitting beside a bed, writing a letter which a patient was dictating, or reading and re-reading to him letters from home.

Kay and I didn't make any drawings in the blind wards, because we didn't think that those boys would care about them. Half of the fun for the patients seemed to be watching us work and comparing drawings.

Valley Forge is one of the Army's centers for the blind. Every day in the long corridors connecting the buildings, we passed blind patients walking along alone or in twos or threes, or accompanied by a Red Cross worker. Many of the men wore dark glasses, a patch over one eye, and carried canes. We never saw a blind patient who shuffled.

The blind at Valley Forge never shuffle because no one feels sorry for them, Lt. Col. Greear, the doctor in charge of the blind, told Kay and me. He said that from the moment of the patient's arrival he is made to feel completely independent by learning to do everything for himself. No one wastes sympathy on him. One idea is instilled in him—he doesn't see with his eyes, he sees with his mind.

"Sometimes," said Col. Greear, "we have to undo what has already been done somewhere else. For example, we had a Negro boy who had been blinded in Italy. He'd been in a hospital overseas where everybody had spoiled him. The nurse had fed him all his meals. The patients had helped him walk back and forth to the latrine. Everybody sympathized with him. When he came to us, he was absolutely helpless—or thought he was—and eaten up with self-pity. After three days he was feeding himself. In less than three months he was walking all around the hospital by himself and he wasn't shuffling."

"Do you ever use the Seeing Eye dogs for your patients?" I asked.

"No," said Col. Greear. "Not here. We prefer to make the man rely completely upon himself.

However, after his discharge, if he really needs a dog for the job he is going to do, we arrange for him to be given one."

"Can a blind patient go home on leave?" asked Kay.

"Oh, yes! After he has been here six weeks, if his physical condition permits it, he is given a month's furlough. We write his family first and tell them all the things that he can do for himself. We ask them not to feel sorry for him and not to help him unless he asks for help. We tell them that he is a perfectly normal human being with a handicap, who is going to be able to live a useful and happy life. We ask them to try and make the adjustment as easy for him as possible by facing his handicap as realistically and fearlessly as he is doing. And usually," said the Colonel, "the family does its part."

We had seen the blind workshop where the patients were weaving rugs and modeling book ends or ash trays out of clay, and Kay had made a drawing there. Now she asked the Colonel, "Do you teach the men trades?"

"Yes," said the Colonel. "When they are able, we have an orientation course for them in a real job.

There's an aircraft plant and a meat-packing factory near here. They employ many of our patients in a full-time capacity. There are no special favors granted them because they are blind. But, to show you how well they can compete, one of our men broke the record for speed and efficiency in his particular job over a department of sighted people."

The Colonel told us about a blind sergeant who had been awarded the Medal of Honor. The sergeant had been on a Flying Fortress raid over Bremen in December, 1943. German fighters had shot his plane down, and it had plunged, burning, into the North Sea. With a chunk of shell in his chest and blinded by gunfire, the sergeant had crawled out onto the wing. The wounded tail gunner, who followed him, weak from his wounds, fell off the wing into the water. The sergeant couldn't see the gunner, but he plunged into the sea in the direction of his call for help. He groped for and found him, dragged him to safety, then held him afloat until they were both rescued.

"When the sergeant came here," said the Colonel, "we removed his right eye, which was infected, in the hope that the vision in the other would clear."

"Did it?" Kay inquired.

"Yes. He regained his sight just a few days ago. The first thing he saw was the bright checkerboard pattern of the afghan on the foot of his bed. He said it looked brighter to him than any technicolor movie he had ever seen."

On our way back to the Nurses' Quarters, Kay and I passed a room where a group of patients were listening absorbedly to a recording of James Hilton's "Lost Horizon." This was one of the talking books we had heard about from some of the nurses. Recordings are made of some of the most famous and best-loved books, and each side of the slow-speed records is equivalent to eight to ten pages of print.

In the corridor a patient passed us, walking alone. He wore dark glasses and carried a cane—the badges of the blind. But he walked with a quick, firm, purposeful stride and carried his head in the air.

All the way back to New York, Kay and I discussed Valley Forge. The old Valley Forge that was the symbol of fortitude and courage, and the new Valley Forge that stood for the miracles of science.

"Imagine," said Kay, "what the hospitals were like during the Revolution."

"I'm imagining," I said. "Three and four

wounded men piled together in a rough bed in a foul-smelling, dirty hospital ward."

"No sterilization, or anesthetics," said Kay. "No blood plasma, but a lot of bloodletting."

"Doctors performing operations 'by guess and by God,'" I said, "and hacking off limbs with a dirty saw."

"That was a time," agreed Kay, "when there were no real nurses; when a man without a nose never got a new one; when a patient with pneumonia died because there was no penicillin; when a blind man shuffled on a cane; and nobody had ever heard of a psychiatrist."

"And now," I said, "a boy without a nose and with scars on his face can say, 'draw me the way I'm going to look when the doc fixes me up'; and a man can learn to grip a golf club with artificial hands; and a blind man can walk to his job without shuffling because he doesn't see with his eyes, but with his mind."

CHAPTER VIII

THE LONG WAY HOME

IN THE BEGINNING I HAD found it hard to get artists for the hospital work. Two or three beside myself were the most I could hope for, for the first few months. Now there were eight artists on Thursday nights for the Brooklyn Naval Hospital, and anywhere from twelve to eighteen on Monday nights for St. Albans.

Some notes from a diary I had kept about the hospital work had been reprinted from the *Junior League Magazine* in the *New York Herald Tribune* and had aroused the interest of artists who heard of the work for the first time. Some wrote to me offering their services. Others wrote that they were already working in local hospitals. Letters came from several hospitals inquiring about a similar program. I had a letter from Sergeant Hal Weinstein

in Italy, who said he had been an artist in civilian life, and suggested that such work could be done overseas.

Artists in other parts of the country were sketching in local hospitals. A group of them from New Rochelle, New York, had been carrying out their program for some time every other Sunday at Halloran General Hospital. They didn't go into the wards as we did, but worked with the ambulatory patients in the recreation hall, turning out beautiful, finished drawings which we envied, and never had time to do.

In Los Angeles, Pruett Carter, one of our best-known illustrators, and Roy Wilson, President of the Los Angeles Art Director's Club, were taking a group of eighteen artists one night every week to the Birmingham General Hospital in nearby Van Nuys.

The Red Cross Arts and Skills were using artists to teach. USO-Camp Shows was sending artists on hospital circuit tours. Several Junior Leagues were sponsoring a sketching program in local hospitals. And Kay Kenny and I found a number of artists from the Philadelphia Stage Door Canteen working at the Valley Forge Hospital.

On the Thursday following August 19, 1944, we celebrated the end of a year of drawing in the wards at the Brooklyn Naval Hospital. Lieut. Heininger was somewhere in the South Pacific, and Chaplain Oldman had received a sudden transfer to the West Coast, where he was awaiting an overseas assignment. But Olson was there, and some of the patients I had met in those first months were still in the hospital.

We knew that the men we had seen in the hospitals during the last year were only the advance guard of those who were to come; and that the hospitals we worked in were only a patch on the national quilt. There were men we knew who had been hospitalized for two years, with no time limit set upon their departure, and there would be more of these. As the war drew to its close, and long after, the wounded would lie in the wards of the Army and Navy hospitals all over the country waiting to get well, waiting to go home. We no longer thought of the work we were doing as a duration job. This was not the end of a year for us, but the beginning of a period of time.

As we went down the driveway that night, past the big, old-fashioned grey stone front of Building

A, I looked up, as usual, to read the inscription over the front door, "U.S. Naval Hospital, erected under act of Congress, A.D., 1838," the inscription that telescoped so many wars. America—the peaceful nation—had fought a war every twenty or twenty-five years from the time of her national infancy and before. Less than twenty-five years after the war to end all wars, she was fighting a war for a brave new world.

I had seen the world the men had built in the hospitals and I had heard them talk about the other world outside. They wanted to go home. Every man there wanted to go home. This thought of home was his armor against so many things—against the draining stump of an amputated leg; the gaping hole where his nose had been; the chills and fever of malaria; the emptiness of blinded eyes; the operation that followed another operation; the weary months in a body cast; the memory of guns. The experiences he had been through; the things he had fought for; the wounds he had suffered; the hospital life of which he was a part, were all incidental to one focal thought in his mind—home.

"But when they do go home," one of the doctors had said to me bitterly, "the adjustment is pretty

hard to make because it's often an adjustment *back* to a way of life which they've grown beyond. It's like asking a college graduate to adjust himself to a group of unthinking kindergarten kids."

"But how do you suddenly educate a group of kindergarten kids?" I asked. "You can't put them through the hell of war these men have been through. You can't expect them to grow up to experiences they haven't had."

"Magazines and newspapers could do it," answered the doctor. "So could radio and films. They're all great mediums for truth, but we rarely use them for that. The thinking of people could be shaped."

"I read somewhere that the War Manpower Commission is finding jobs for returning veterans at the rate of more than fifty thousand a month," I ventured.

"What good will a job do the veteran," demanded the doctor angrily, "if the morale of the people he lives and works with is below par? Don't you see that, regardless of what the hell he went into the war for, he has come out with a new sense of values?"

"Yes, but didn't that happen in the last war?"

"I was in the last war," said the doctor, "and it

didn't happen to me. If it happened to the others, it didn't happen to enough of them to make a dent in the American consciousness. In this war it's happened to a hell of a lot of men, and I'm trying to figure out what's going to happen to them when enough of them come home. The history of our veterans isn't a very pretty one. In every war from the Revolution on down, we've taken a generation of young civilians and ruthlessly turned them into soldiers. We've used them up and sacrificed them and when they came back, denied them." He tamped tobacco into his pipe with his strong surgeon's fingers. "I ran into one of my patients recently," he said puffing thoughtfully, "coming out of a bar uptown. I had seen him before he went home on a thirty-day leave—he lived in Chicago—and I never saw a kid so excited. He hadn't been home for over two years. He'd been in North Africa and Italy and finally France. That kid was so glad to get out of the war and be back on American soil, he was almost crazy. Well, as I say, I met him on the last day of his furlough coming out of a bar. He must have been in it for a long time to get as drunk as he was. When I asked him about his leave, he said, 'Jesus Christ! I don't understand it, I don't

understand it at all. I don't give a Goddam if I never go home again!' That's the way one of the veterans felt about it."

"What did the family do that was wrong?" I asked.

"Everything," said the doctor. "Oh, it wasn't that they weren't glad to have him home, it was just their way of thinking. He said his father talked a lot about how lucky we were to have had so few losses in the war—the kid had seen some of his buddies die—and that, thank God, it would be over soon and we'd be fools if we didn't let Europe settle its own future; what we wanted to do was to mind our own business and get back to making money. His mother said she didn't have to worry about the war now that he was back, and thank goodness, we could soon give up rationing. Some of his family's friends admitted they were pretty tired of the war, though they hadn't been fighting it. Several of them said they had resigned from war jobs in order to get into something with a sound future to it. He didn't talk to his girl because she had married somebody else. He said everything he heard while he was home made him wonder what it was he'd given up three years of his life and his right arm for. He said he

guessed he had more in common with the guys he'd been fighting than with his own family and friends."

I didn't say anything because I had heard the same story from some of the men I knew. It was a story with which I was very familiar—the wounded veteran who came home and the family and friends and community that let him down.

"What would you suggest?" I asked.

"I'd suggest that everyone in these United States should be made aware of the veteran problem and should attempt to understand these men," said the doctor promptly. "This is the most critical postwar problem we have to face. Why the hell don't we face it? We'll go on fighting war after war until we solve this one great social problem. Sure, it'll cost a lot of money to solve the veteran problem, but the cost of not solving that problem will be a damn sight higher than the cost of solving it. These men faced death or mutilation. They killed. They saw their buddies die. They did their part. Okay, let the nation pull in its belt and do without in order to pay its debt to these guys. And I don't mean free handouts, either. If after this war we follow our tradition of neglecting veterans, they're going to be bitter, and their accumulated bitterness is going to

be dangerous. Without any missionary zeal or sentimentality, the facts of the case are that this country can't afford to let these men down. The men who fought this war are going to hold the future of the world and the balance of power in their hands, and Goddamit!" he said violently, "I hope they find it out before it's too late. It's a hell of a note to build these kids up in the hospitals and then send them out to be slapped down by an adolescent world!"

The doctor echoed what many of the hospital personnel thought and feared about the future of their patients outside the hospitals. A chaplain told me that he did not believe the veterans would turn to religion unless the churches developed something concrete to offer them.

"These men," he said, "have been living and fighting and dying together. They have developed a strong sense of comradeship and sharing. Barriers of race, religion and class have been broken down. They no longer live to themselves alone. Every man has become his brother's keeper. In short, they have found the soul of religion. And having found it, they will have no patience with words alone. The

churches, like the men, must have a spiritual awakening."

A nurse said to me, "If only the women will try to understand these men and meet them halfway."

"What should they do?" I asked.

"They should care, first of all," she said, "and they should show him that they care. They shouldn't be over-emotional, but they shouldn't be too casual, either. They should try to be *natural*. The natural thing if your son or husband comes home blind or without a leg is to cry. You cry for his loss and the suffering he has had. You cry because your long waiting is at an end and he has returned to you. You cry for the past. Get it out of your system. You can face the future with your chin up because he is with you. You don't hesitate to mention his handicap. You face it squarely. You know that together you can build up a good life whatever that handicap is. But before you get tough, be tender. I would say there are three rules to follow for the woman who has a wounded veteran coming home. Be honest, be tender, be brave."

From the time that the wounded arrived on American soil, the band that played current tunes at the docks or airport; the smiling Red Cross women

serving hot coffee and doughnuts; the drivers of the ambulances and the nurses riding with them to the receiving hospitals, all conspired to give the men their first impression of a welcoming America.

In the hospitals, where they lay between clean sheets and where they ate real food again; where a telephone was plugged in by their beds so that they could call home; where Grey Ladies wrote letters for them; where famous movie stars stopped by their beds to say hello; where the latest books and magazines were brought to them; where the finest doctors and nurses and technicians, the most expensive drugs, and the most advanced knowledge of science were united in an effort to save their lives, no wonder a guy could sigh with the satisfaction of somebody who's done his job: "It's good to be back home, it's good to be alive!"

No wonder, then, that the world the wounded created *inside* the four walls of the hospital was the same brave new world they had fought for. But while they lay in the wards in hospitals all over the country, the amputations, and the blindness, and the disfigurements, and the combat fatigue were all incidental to the one great question in their minds. The hospital was now—but afterward what was America going to do about the guys?

